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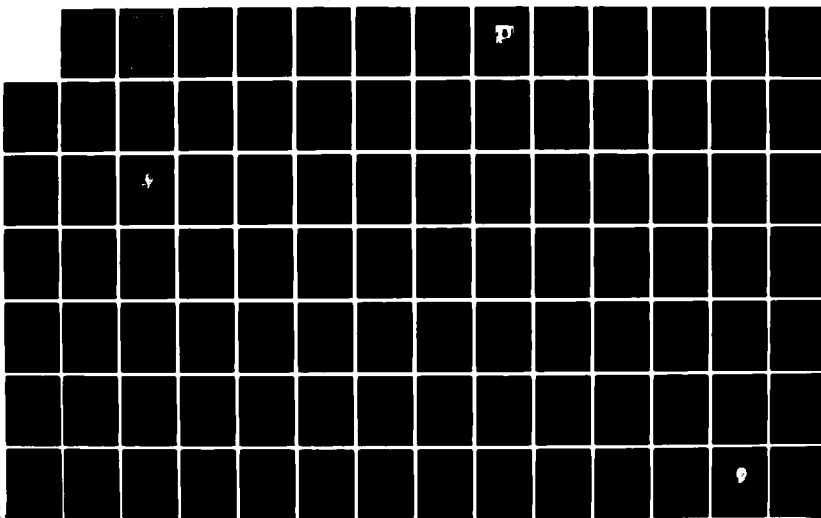
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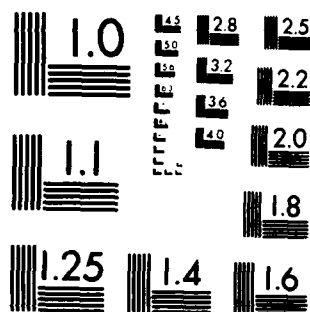
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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS TOMBIGBEE HISTORIC TOWNSITES PROJECT

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Volume 6
(Interview Numbers 129-133)



Compiled by:
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and
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TOMBIGBEE HISTORIC TOWNSITES PROJECT
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

Volume 6
(Interview Nos. 129-133)

Compiled by
James M. McClurken
and
Peggy Uland Anderson

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| TITLE | 1 |
| LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS | 111 |
| OH 129 Bertie Shaw Rollins | 971 |
| OH 130 Andrew Lenoir, Jr. | 993 |
| OH 131 Joseph Mitchell | 1059 |
| OH 132 Josie Harris Kennedy | 1093 |
| OH 133 Henry Mitchell | 1129 |

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

| Figure | Page |
|--|------|
| 1. Sketch map of Vinton and Barton house locations | 1121 |
| 2. Floor plan of the Harris ferry house | 1122 |
| 3. Floor plan of the Atkins-Phillips house | 1123 |
| 4. Floor plan of the High Water-Montgomery house | 1124 |
| 5. Floor plan of the Keller-Butts house | 1125 |
| 6. Floor plan of the Perkins house | 1126 |
| 7. Floor plan of the Lucy Natcher house | 1127 |
| 8. Floor plan of the Vinton School | 1128 |

THTP - Oral History Interview OH 129
An interview with
Bertie Shaw Rollins

conducted and edited by
James M. McClurken



Bertie Rollins was born in Darracott, Mississippi on October 27, 1904. The Shaw family moved to Monroe County before the Civil War and maintained close ties with Vinton residents through their membership in the Vinton Masonic Lodge. A great deal of Vinton's history has been preserved in letters and documents owned by the Shaw family. Mrs. Rollins is a local historian and has spent a great deal of time studying documents as well as listening to the stories of the older members of the community. In this interview some of the earliest families to occupy Barton are discussed, and the houses where they resided are described.

This interview was conducted with Mrs. Rollins in her home by James McClurken on March 10, 1980.

M: This is an interview with Mrs. Bertie Shaw Rollins for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by James M. McClurken. The date is March 9, 1980. Mrs. Rollin's address is 519 South Hickory, Aberdeen, Mississippi 39730. Her telephone number is 369-2446. The interview is taking place in Mrs. Rollin's home.

I'd like to start by asking you when and where you were born?

R: October 21, 1904. I am seventy-five years old.

M: Where were you born?

R: At Darracott, at Darracott out here. My Grandfather Shaw owned six hundred and forty acres of land, and he employed white people as well as colored people. He operated a sawmill, furnished the lumber for and built the covered part of James Creek bridge in 1848.

M: What was his name?

R: William Mansfield Shaw.

M: Where was he from?

R: He was born in Danville, Virginia on February 16, 1812. The family later moved to Putnam County, Tennessee. He and my grandmother married in 1841 and came to Monroe County, to south Monroe County, in 1843.

M: What was your grandmother's name?

R: Angeline Boyde Butler. Her people were very wealthy. The Shaws were very wealthy, too. Her family owned large coal mines and health resorts in east Tennessee.

M: What brought them to this part of the world?

R: Darracott, that is where they first settled, down there east of Darracott. He owned all that land on the Tombigbee River.

M: Did they come here to farm?

R: He built antebellum homes in Aberdeen and farmed, too. You see, he had white and colored people to work his farms. They tended to that.

M: So, he was a man of many occupations.

R: Yes, he was a well-read man and highly educated.

M: How many children did he have?

R: Twelve.

M: Can you name them all?

R: Yes. Anna Elizabeth, Martha Jane, Mary Lutitia, Emily Louisa, William Henry Clay, Charles Wilder, Virginia Tennessee Shaw, my father James Bolivar, Jacob Franklin, Arthur Mansfield, and Obadiah Charlton were the names of the children.

M: With that many children, yours must have been a prominent family.

R: They were very prominent. My grandfather was deputy sheriff and justice of the peace in Aberdeen. He and Ruben Davis were close friends, and my grandmother was related to Ruben Davis. I have placed Ruben Davis's and my grandfather's business papers in the Mitchell Memorial Library at Mississippi State University. I have all of my grandfather's papers down there. He was a very prominent man.

M: What other places did you deposit papers at?

R: In the Department of Archives and History, in Jackson. Dr. William McCain in 1955. . . . You see, when Ruben Davis died in 1890, there wasn't anybody in Aberdeen who knew the exact date that he died on. I didn't know that they didn't know it until our mayor, Mr. Horace Howell, mentioned it to me at the post office one day. He said, "I do wish that we could find someone that knew when Ruben Davis died." I said, "Mr. Howell, I know. I have his funeral notice." Mrs. Davis sent it to my father. My grandfather died March 5, 1890, and Ruben Davis died on the fifteenth of October 1890. So I said, "I have the funeral notice that Mrs. Davis sent to my father." Papa went to the funeral. The second Mrs. Davis was a Virginian, like my grandfather. Every mirror in the extensive house was sheeted over with white linen sheets. Not a mirror was exposed. It was so odd Papa thought, but they did the same thing at my grandfather's funeral because that was a Virginia custom.

M: Where was your grandfather's funeral?

R: At the Lebanon Cemetery. He is buried out where the Lebanon Presbyterian church is.

M: Did the funeral take place in his house?

R: Yes, the funeral took place in his house. He had a large two-story house, with seventeen rooms. He had such a large family. (laughter)

M: Why did they cover the mirrors for the funeral?

R: Because that was a Virginia custom.

- M: Was there any special meaning in it?
- R: No, it was just a Virginia custom.
- M: Where was his house sitting? Can you give me specific directions?
- R: Yes, it was sitting about a mile east of Darracott, directly east of Darracott crossroad, in a grove of beautiful cedar trees, with a large, iron fence and gateposts and things around it. I lived in that home and loved it.
- M: Can you describe the house to me?
- R: Well, it had a large parlor. It was a two-story house, and it had large bedrooms upstairs, downstairs too, and then the kitchen and dining room.
- M: Was the kitchen attached to the house?
- R: Yes, it was attached to the house, but they had a closed in place with a building attached to the kitchen that was used as a smoke-house. That's where they cured their meats and things.
- M: Did all of the children live there most of their lives?
- R: They all lived here, and every one of them lived to be past fifty years of age.
- M: That was quite something back then, wasn't it?
- R: Yes, it was really something to be proud of. And if I do say it, forgive me, they were all very handsome. The ladies were beautiful, and the men were handsome.
- M: Was your father James Bolivar Shaw?
- R: Yes.
- M: Can you tell me a little bit about him?
- R: They didn't have to do much work or anything because they had the colored people and the white people to do the work and things. He was just a man-about-home. He adored his mother. At the age of thirteen, he became a clairvoyant and performed everywhere. It was miraculous and strange what he could do. He quit it though. He got so tired. The Tatums--I guess Burl Basinger told you about the Tatums--were artists down there that owned the big plantation.
- M: Who is that?
- R: The Tatums, Messrs. Joel and Haywood Tatum, were artists.

M: Did they live down on the river?

R: They lived south of my grandfather. They wanted to carry my father to Europe, but he did not want to go. My grandmother wouldn't sign the papers. They wanted to exhibit him in Europe, but because Daddy didn't want to go, she wouldn't sign the papers, and he didn't go. He became so tired of it, being kept up day and night here in Aberdeen and different places, everywhere he went, until he quit when he was twenty-one years old. It was strange. He could read your mind. That's the reason we could never tell him a story. He predicted his death a year before he died. He said that he would die on Christmas Eve day and be buried on Christmas Day. That just worried us to death. Do you know that that is exactly what happened?

M: Did he read your mind when you were a child, too?

R: Yes. That is the reason that we never could tell him a story. He knew everything that we were thinking. I adored him; I just worshiped my father. I was so grieved and torn up when he passed away. If I hadn't had little Grady, I believe that I would have lost my sanity. That's just how much I adored my father.

M: So you grew up in your grandfather's house?

R: Not all the time, but we lived there in later years. The estate wasn't settled until 1923.

M: That is when you moved into it. Where did you live before that?

R: Out there where Burl Basinger lives. That was known as the Thraikill place then, but we lived there. That was a big house, my father and mother had known Mr. and Mrs. Basinger, especially Mrs. Basinger, for years, but they became intimate when we lived so close together there.

M: How many children were there in your family?

R: Five. I have two sisters, Mrs. Otho Harris and Mrs. Cullie Cain. I had two brothers, but they died when they were small. They are buried at Lebanon Cemetery, but Mama and Papa are buried up here at Odd Fellow's Rest in Aberdeen.

M: So, your father was an Odd Fellow?

R: He had his faults, of course, and a lot of them, but he was straightforward, and he was a powerful man and a brave man. He didn't fear anything.

M: Did he belong to the organization called the Odd Fellows?

R: No, but my Uncle Charles Wilder Shaw did. They belonged at Vinton first. They had their lodge at Vinton, and Uncle Charlie joined

down there. Then they moved it up to Aberdeen. My father said that the reason he didn't join the Masons was because it was a secret, and he didn't believe in anything being secret.

M: Did you ever hear any stories about the Masonic Lodge in Vinton?

R: Only that they had their meetings there. I have read that in the old letters. They held their meetings there. I don't know for how many years, but it must have been quite a few before they moved it to Aberdeen.

M: You never heard your uncle talk about the building?

R: No, because my uncle lived at Shannon, Mississippi. He married a lady from Shannon, Dr. West's daughter, and they lived up there. I never heard him. I didn't see him too often.

M: Did you ever go to Vinton when you were a girl?

R: Yes, I've been to Vinton and remember the old schoolhouse, many houses, and so many other things about Vinton down there.

M: You have some notes here?

R: Yes, I have notes. Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church was a large church at Vinton. It also had the Vinton Methodist Church and the Concob Baptist Church which was for the black people of the community. My grandmother, Mrs. William Shaw, was a member of Pilgrim's Rest. Mr. Cox was a rich planter of Vinton. When he joined the Confederate Army, he buried ten-thousand dollars in gold but didn't tell Mrs. Cox where it was. When my father James Boliver Shaw, who was a clairvoyant, reached the age of thirteen, Mrs. Cox sent for him. He lead them to the exact place and found the gold in a stone jar. He was rewarded handsomely. Mrs. Cox was so excited over it that she really rewarded Daddy handsomely.

M: Did she pay him in gold?

R: Yes, she gave him some of the gold that he found in the stone jar. There was another prominent family at Vinton, the Keaton family. They were very influential. Mr. Keaton was an old man, and he had so much property that on his deathbed, he married a young lady, Miss Molly Cogsdell. It seems like his name was Jim Keaton, but I am not sure about that. Later, she married Mr. Richardson, and they bought the Tatum place. She and Mr. Richardson are buried out at Lebanon Cemetery. She was a great friend of our family. We loved Mrs. Richardson. Mr. William Trotter owned a large, two-story, white house with large columns on the west side of the road that went to Vinton, at Vinton. He owned a large mercantile store. His goods were shipped by way of steamboat and stagecoach from Mobile, Alabama. Here is quite a little incident about Lebanon and Vinton. Lebanon and Vinton had baseball clubs. My father, two of his brothers, Messrs. Robert and Benjamin Bradley, and Mr. Darracott

were on the Lebanon Club. Vinton Ball Club challenged Lebanon Ball Club to a game. The Vinton Ball Club lost to Lebanon, much to their chagrin. Colonel Muldrow was the speaker. That is in the old letters.

M: When you went to Vinton, did you go down there to visit people?

R: No, I never visited any. Not long before my father died, he always liked to go down to the old cemetery which is on the left side of the road, because they were so closely associated with the Vinton people. Not long before he passed away, he wanted to go to the cemetery and see the old graves. I carried him down there, and we went through the entire cemetery.

M: Who were his close friends down there?

R: Everybody down there was a close friend. My grandmother, as I told you before, belonged to Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church, and it wasn't moved to a central location until 1876, moved to where Bethel is. It became Bethel Baptist Church.

M: Does the Bethel building look like it did when it was at Vinton?

R: Yes, it looks exactly like it did when they built the building in 1876. My grandmother and all of her children were members of the church. My grandmother passed away before I was born.

M: Did anything that you know about it come from your father?

R: Just what has been told to me by the family.

M: Can you tell me a little more about the Cox people? Can you tell me Mr. Cox's name?

R: No, I can't. The family referred to him as Mr. Cox, and I don't know his first name. I don't remember his first name being in any of the old letters.

M: Did you ever visit the house site?

R: Yes, I've seen the house. I remember the Cox house. I used to go down there as a child. I remember the Cox house and his large store building.

M: What did the house look like?

R: I can't remember too much about the interior, but the outside of it was painted white and was a beautiful structure, two-story, with large, white columns all across the front.

M: How many columns would you say that it had?

R: I will say that there were at least six, if not more.

M: Do you remember where the chimneys were?

R: At each end, the north and south ends of the house.

M: Did they have two or four chimneys?

R: I think that they had four chimneys; I'm pretty sure that they did.

M: Did they have a balcony on the upstairs?

R: Yes, they had a balcony. It didn't extend all the way across the house but was just in the middle section of the house.

M: Would that have been an antebellum home?

R: Oh, yes. It was an antebellum home.

M: Were there slave quarters around it?

R: Yes, I remember the old slave buildings.

M: Do you remember how many there were?

R: No, I don't. I just remember the outbuildings that Papa said were slave buildings.

M: Now, the old town of Colbert sat on the Cox place. Do you remember anybody talking about the town of Colbert?

R: No, I don't remember.

M: You must have gone into the house.

R: Oh, yes. I'm sure that we went through it. We went through the first section of the house, but I don't remember what it looked like. I was so small at the time. Those things didn't impress me much.

M: You had lived in your grandfather's house by then.

R: There was no home in the world like my grandfather's home, where he and my grandmother lived and all of his children grew up. My father was forty-seven years old before he ever married.

M: How did he meet your mother?

R: My mother was Martha Thompson and her family, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Thompson, lived down below where Burl Basinger lives now. They saw each other at all of the country gatherings and everything. But you know, my mother was twenty-five and Papa was forty-seven when they married. She said that the day they married he didn't look a day over twenty-five years old.

M: He was a handsome man.

R: Yes, he was. Everybody tells me that, and I am so proud that

Mrs. Walker Milon's daughter, Miss Payne Lenoir, painted those portraits of my parents. She is a genius, and I love Emma and Marylou. They are two very prominent ladies of Aberdeen. I wanted to get that in.

M: Can you tell me a little bit about the store that Mr. Trotter owned?

R: Yes. I remember that it was a very large store, and he handled a complete general line of merchandise, everything. I have placed a bill of sale from him to Grandfather in Mitchell Memorial Library, a bill of sale with Trotter's name and everything on it.

M: Can you remember what the outside of the store looked like?

R: To me it was built just like a large church, a one-story large church. The roof just had the sloping sides.

M: What way did it face?

R: It faced west. The store faced west, as did the house. The store and house were very close together.

M: Do you remember if it was broken into rooms on the inside?

R: No, I do not. We got away from them, the family. The old people passed away down there and there wasn't any incentive to go back, just on trips occasionally to Vinton.

M: Was there another house besides the one that Mr. Trotter lived in?

R: Not close together it no. His home and store were on this high knoll. I know the exact spot that it was on. There weren't any other buildings close to it.

M: Was there ever a blacksmith shop?

R: I am sure that he had one, but I don't know about that.

M: At one time, a man named Mr. Hodo ran a gristmill there.

R: Oh, he did?

M: Do you know anything about that?

R: I remember the name Hodo because my Grandfather Thompson bought his plantation, south of Burl Basinger, from Mr. Hodo. My first cousin, Norman Thompson, still owns that land.

M: Were there any other houses along the road?

R: Yes, not any antebellum homes like that, but just small homes. When I first remember going down there, it was thickly settled, but the people moved away and left. There may be a few families down

there; I wouldn't know. I haven't been there in a long time. Somehow, after carrying Papa through the cemetery and him being so sad, I didn't want to go back down there.

M: Do you remember any homes south of the cemetery, on the main road?

R: Yes, there were some homes south of the cemetery, not any palatial homes, just medium-sized homes on the road to Barton Ferry. I don't remember Mr. Barton's first name, but he ran the ferry there. There was an inn and a store at the ferry. Whether Mr. Barton owned them and operated them, I don't know, but there was an inn and store. Where the old inn was, there used to be two great, iron posts standing, but the last time I was down there someone had removed them, and they were not there anymore, just south of the ferry.

M: Were there ever two ferries? Was there one just north of where the present one is?

R: There was one up here at Morgan's Landing, up here in Monroe County. Then of course, there was the Waverly ferry.

M: Do you remember what those two iron posts were?

R: They were just huge iron posts. (pause) Everything that we have goes to my son and he knows it. He can divide it among his three boys as he wants to, but he loves my things.

M: You have a fine lot of furniture here. Were any of these pieces your grandfather's furniture?

R: This is my grandmother's silver that was made by R. Wallace in 1837, and this is her china. Isn't it beautiful?

M: Yes it is, white china with pink roses. Can you tell me a little more about the Barton Inn?

R: Well, it was a rather large place, because people went to the ferry to catch the steamboats, to get on and off there. I think that it was a rather large place, the inn was, because it was over from Columbus to the inn, you see.

M: But you were never there?

R: No, it was gone before I remembered. It was close to the ferry, right on close to the riverbank by the ferry, Papa said.

M: Do you remember any people named Foote?

R: Well, there was a family of Footes who lived at Darracott years ago. Their grandson lives next door to me, Mr. Alvy Foote.

M: Did you ever visit them when they were down there?

R: No.

M: Can you tell me a little bit about steamboats?

R: It was a great thing on the Tombigbee River. They used to get up parties, and my father told me that he had danced all the way from Aberdeen to Mobile on the steamboat. They had a marvelous time. Daddy loved fun; he enjoyed having a a good time. He loved people. He wanted to mix and mingle with people, so he just had a real good life. He enjoyed life and he got a lot out of it.

M: Did your grandfather ever ship cotton?

R: Yes, he shipped cotton from Barton Ferry down to Mobile.

M: Do you know what company he sold his cotton to?

R: I don't have any papers on that, but I know that he shipped cotton from Barton Ferry to Mobile.

M: Did your father ever tell you the names of any of the steamboats?

R: Well, there was the Eliza and the Lilly Lou. My sister, Mrs. Cain, is named Lilly Lou after the steamboat on the Tombigbee River. I have it in my old records, but I don't have them here at home. There were numerous steamboats that plied this river all the time.

M: Did they always land at Barton Ferry?

R: Yes, they always landed at Barton Ferry.

M: Did they ever land at Vinton?

R: No, because Vinton was this side of Barton Ferry. Vinton was north of Barton Ferry, and there wouldn't have been a landing place there.

M: Did you ever know any people named Howard?

R: Yes, there was a Mr. Van Howard who lived down in the Vinton community, and his daughter Rebecca was a head nurse out here at the Aberdeen Hospital for a long time. She had a brother named Van. Her father's name was Van.

M: Did you ever visit them?

R: No, they lived too far away to visit.

M: You mentioned the name Cogsdell.

R: Yes, there were a lot of Cogsdells. There was Mr. Barney Cogsdell-- they lived at Vinton--and Mrs. Richardson, who married Mr. Keaton, was Miss Molly Cogsdell.

M: Do you know where they lived?

R: No, I don't know exactly, but they lived at Vinton. I know that.

M: Were there any other old, old names from Vinton that you can recall besides Cox, Cogsdell, and Keaton?

R: Trotter.

M: Did you ever hear about a Mr. Miller?

R: It seems like I have, but I can't recall exactly.

M: When you used to go to Vinton, how did you go?

R: In the horse and buggy; that was before cars. They weren't too plentiful then.

M: How long did it take you to go from Darracott to Vinton?

R: At least an hour. We never drove fast. It took us at least an hour to go from Darracott to Vinton.

M: Did you go often?

R: Not too often.

M: What did you do while you were down there?

R: Just look around. We didn't stay very long. We went through the old schoolhouse. It was on the west side of the road. If I remember correctly, when I was small, there was a church. It couldn't have been Pilgrim's Rest because it was moved in 1876, but I remember an old church. I guess that it could have been the Methodist Church or it could have been the colored church, Concob.

M: What did the inside of the school look like?

R: It was a large room built ordinarily like country schools were built then. I imagine that the original schools were down.

M: Did it have desks in it?

R: Yes, it had desks.

M: Did it have benches in it as well?

R: Yes, it had benches for recital and everything.

M: Where was the heater?

R: In the middle of the room. The heater was a large, iron heater sitting in the middle of the room.

M: Did it have doors on both ends?

R: I know it had two doors on the front, but I can't remember about the back.

M: Where did you go to school?

R: To Darracott High School.

M: I see.

R: In the winter of 1922 and 1923 I lived with Mrs. Miles Barnett up here in the old Masonic Temple home and took a business education course under Miss Whitey at the Aberdeen school.

M: You were pretty well educated.

R: You can say I was among average.

M: Has the education around here always been pretty good?

R: Yes.

M: I have some names here I'd like to ask you about. They were taken from some of your family papers. We were wondering if you could tell us about Mary Shaw?

R: Mary Lutitia Shaw, that was my father's sister.

M: I see.

R: And Elizabeth was the oldest child. Mr. Haywood Tatum was an artist.

M: Could you tell me a little more about him?

R: Yes, let me get my history, Darracott history. I let Nell Basinger use my old letters. I have the history of my family up at the Evans Memorial Library. I have a large collection up there.

M: Who is that letter from?

R: That was Aunt Virginia Tennessee. She was named Jennie. It was to my Aunt Anna in Tennessee who was teaching school there.

M: I see.

R: I will endeavor to answer your joyfully received letter. Mrs. Bill Webb died week before last; she had been sick a month. They had two doctors waiting on her; I was very sorry to hear of her death for I thought a great deal of her.

I must tell you something about the Ku Klux, they are raging

on the other side of the river. They have whipped several white men, whipped and killed several Negroes. They whipped Colonel Huggins, the superintendent of the free schools, nearly to death, and everybody rejoiced when they heard it, for everybody hated him. He has squandered the public money, buying pianofortes, organs, sofas and furniture for the Negro schoolhouse in Aberdeen. The people are taxed beyond endurance. The Ku Klux gave Huggins seventy lashes, and then gave him ten days to leave the country. He left and went to Jackson. There was a regiment of militia came into Aberdeen Friday. They are sent here to put down the Ku Klux. Huggins has come back with the militia, but I wouldn't give a straw for his life, for he will be killed.

It is the opinion of most everybody there will be war, the Yankees coming here will make the Negroes more insolent, with the country full of Yankees, things are going too far, for the free whites of the South are determined not to put up with it. A Negro can kill a white man, take it in court, get a Negro jury, clear him and turn him loose, things can't go on this way. We are in a most peculiar situation. Give my love to all the connection and write soon. Yours, Jennie.¹

This is March 30, 1871.

M: Was that one of the letters that you inherited?

R: Yes.

M: Did you know Mr. Bill Webb?

R: No, but my family did. When my grandfather was deputy sheriff up here, he stayed in Aberdeen all during the week and just went out to his home on weekends. He stayed at the City Hotel with Mr. Bill Webb.

M: Do you recognize any of the other people on that list?

R: I've heard of John McNeal; he was from Vinton.

M: Do you know anything about their family?

R: No, I don't, we have things in the attic. Now, Mr. Jim Andrews had two daughters, Mrs. Hattie and Mrs. Sarah. Miss Hattie Andrews married Mr. Robert Bradley. The other Andrews lady married Mr. Ben Bradley. I can't recall her name right now. Robert Hudson, who owns and runs the Hudson's Drugstore is the grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Bradley.

¹Morgan, Ruth Basinger. 1978. A Place Called Darracott. p. 50
Aberdeen, Mississippi

The Rodgers is Mr. Timothy Rodgers who lived right across from Free Grace Baptist Church.

M: Who is he?

R: He had sons, Mr. William P. Rodgers and Francis Marion Rodgers, I believe were their names. Anyway they have descendants in the community. Bad crops of 1875. . . . I have old letters about them. They had a terrible year. They didn't make very many crops. Mrs. Smith was kin to Burl Basinger.

M: What Mrs. Smith is it that you know about?

R: Mr. William Henry Smith. I don't know whether she was a Taylor that married him or not, but I know she is kin to Burl. Mr. Charlie Moore was a professor, teacher. He taught a private school, and all of my grandfather's children went to him. He was a wonderful person. The Kings out at Egypt and Aberdeen are descendants of Mr. Charlie Moore.

M: Where was his school?

R: At his home, I think. I think he also taught some at Bethel, the Andrews School at Bethel.

M: Was that a private school?

R: No, that was a public school. Ella Green Bullock married my Uncle William Henry Clay Shaw. Miss Bullock's mother, Mrs. Cornelia Bullock, came to Aberdeen. She and Mr. John Bullock. . . . In 1853 they were here. They were communicants of St. John's Episcopal Church here. Mrs. Cornelia Bullock was a direct descendant of Julian S. Calvert, the North Carolina tobacco magnet. And so my Aunt Virginia Tennessee married Edward Lewis Bullock; she just had two children, a son and a daughter. They are all buried out here in the old cemetery.

M: The old Aberdeen Cemetery?

R: Yes, in the old cemetery. Aunt Jennie is buried in the Bullock lot with a beautiful iron fence around it that was given to Mrs. Bullock, my Aunt Jennie, when she died in Birmingham in 1908 by Mrs. Mariah Elkins of Holliday Haven. She gave her that beautiful fence. That was a magnificent gesture of Mrs. Mariah Elkins's. Mrs. Elkins was a wonderful lady.

M: Was your family quite close to her?

R: Yes, when Mrs. Bullock died in 1912 in Oxford, Tennessee, they brought her back here, and the funeral was held in Mrs. Elkins's home. Mrs. Annie Poe, all I know about her is that she married a Mr. Leavender, and Miss Mattie Poe married Mr. Louis Brown. Mr. Ben Darracott married Miss Betty Taylor. Tom Dukeminier married Mammie

Walker; she was the daughter of Dr. W. F. Walker, out there this side of Lebanon Church. His son, Mr. William Walker, was a prominent Aberdeen lawyer and was a legislator in Jackson who died with pneumonia. He married Mary Dudley Sykes of Aberdeen.

M: I see.

R: And their daughter, Mrs. James M. Acker, still lives in the antebellum home on Commerce Street.

M: I see.

R: Yeah, I told you that Willie Poe died. My father's sister, Aunt Martha Jane, married James Riley Poe. They had a little son, Willie Poe, and he died. I know about Mrs. Jim Bradley. She was Dr. Moore's daughter. The Reading Club at the Grange Hall. . . . My Uncle William Henry Shaw was a steward in the Lebanon Grange down here where the church is. They had great social gatherings there after they built the large grange. I remember the Grange Hall; it was very large. They organized a reading club. Mr. Charlie Moore was the president, and Papa was the secretary.

M: What kind of things did they get together to do?

R: Oh, they'd dance. They had the first fair that was ever held out there in Grange Hall in 1878.

M: What kind of things did they have at the fair?

R: Oh, everything pertaining to country produce, horse racing, great entertainment. They had a marvelous time, and in the afternoon they'd have a baseball game.

M: I see. Did a lot of people have horse racing around here?

R: Yes, they did. Daddy enjoyed horse racing so much. (laughter)

M: Where did they have them?

R: Down on the Darracott Road and different places.

M: Did they lay money on bets?

R: No, no, no! My father was T-totally against gambling in any form.

M: You've told me quite a bit about the people out there. Could you tell me what it was like in your time to be growing up out there?

R: Well, it was marvelous because everybody was friendly, so much more friendly than they are now. They mixed and mingled with one another, having the meetings at the different churches, all-day singings, get togethers, Fourth of July picnics at Lebanon. It was a grand time growing up. I would love to go back and live just one day of that time over again.

M: What one day would you want to live over?

R: Any of them; just any of them.

M: Was there any one day that was real special to you?

R: Well, no not one. They were all special to me and all of us.

M: What was it like going to an all-day singing?

R: Oh, it was wonderful. They had people from Aberdeen, the great singers Mr. L. B. Cole, Mr. William Ed Ware, and all the singers from Aberdeen went out there. They had big dinners on the ground and the most marvelous singing you have ever heard. And Mr. Cole, he and my father were good friends. He would always sing "Amazing Grace" for Papa because that was Papa's favorite religious song. Mr. L. B. Cole was a marvelous singer.

M: What other songs did your father like?

R: Well, he liked them all; he loved singing.

M: What song did he sing to you when you were a little girl?

R: Well, just the ones that were going around. My mother graduated in music, in organ and piano, and she was the organist at Lebanon Church for forty years. But do you know that my sisters, Mrs. Cain, nor Mrs. Harris, nor I can play a tune to nothing. (laughter) Isn't that something? Papa was a violinist. He played a violin beautifully.

M: Did he play for any of the dances?

R: Yes, yes.

M: Where were the dances held?

R: They danced in different homes out there.

M: Did they have a regular circuit?

R: No, they just danced in different homes. Papa used to give lots of dances.

M: Yeah?

R: Papa and Mama.

M: They used to play together?

R: Yes.

M: That must have been fun. Did you ever get to go to the dances they played at?

R: Yes, I danced, too. Daddy danced, and I learned to dance when I was very young. I danced until I got too old. (laughter) I love dancing. I square danced. That was the old dance, you know, the square dance.

M: Uh-huh.

R: Then what they called the round house dance came in, and I will never forget that Mr. Basinger would always give dances. They had their front yard full of beautiful, blooming rosebushes. I will never forget the moonlight and those beautiful roses. I thought about that last night, the good times we had.

M: Did you have any food there when you were at the dances? Did they have picnics out there too?

R: No, they just went to the dance. They didn't serve anything.

M: Did you bring the horse and buggy out to each of these dances?

R: It was the horse and buggy. I had a beau and he got a car. Then we'd go in the car.

M: How did you court your men back when you were growing up?

R: (laughter) I don't know!

M: Oh, come on you have to had done it; you caught one. (laughter)
I was wondering if you could tell me when your grandfather's house burned down or how it was destroyed?

R: The house burned down in about 1925.

M: You moved up to Aberdeen after that?

R: No, Papa was already living up there. Papa and Mama moved to Aberdeen in March 1924. They had to settle the Shaw estate, so they moved to Aberdeen.

M: Could you tell me a little bit about the Ellis family?

R: Well, I've heard of them, but I don't know too much about them. I think I have something in my old letters at Mitchell Memorial Library.

M: What about Mr. Gibson?

R: Mr. Ned Gibson. Yes, I remember he and Mrs. Gibson both. I don't remember Mrs. Gibson's name but they used to visit my aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. L. J. Gallup.

M: Where did they live?

R: Right east above Burl Basinger's, not quite a mile.

M: Did they live right by the crossroads?

R: Yes, east of the crossroads.

M: Down on the river more?

R: No, right east, above Burl Basingers from crossroads. Billy Elam owns the Eden place now. It's up on the hill.

M: Where did you shop most often when you were a girl?

R: Well, we shopped at Rubel's and Laskey's, in Aberdeen. That's where we always shopped when we came to town. Papa always brought me to town with him. The first place he took me to was Gay's Drug-store for a bowl of ice cream. We had a grand time together. He and Mama did all of the shopping at Laskey's. It's still in business. Bernard Laskey runs it, and Rubel's store is out of business.

M: Did you shop much at the little stores?

R: Well, they had little stores down there. Mr. William Bagwell had a small. . . .

M: Where did you clerk?

R: For Mrs. Nettie Darracott, the wife of Doctor George F. Darracott, down there at the old store building. It's still there. She ran a general mercantile store. She had dry goods, groceries, and everything. In the fall of the year she'd buy bushels and bushels of scaly barks from the neighbors in the prairie and shipped them.

M: Where did she ship them to?

R: I don't remember.

M: What kind of dry goods did she keep?

R: Well, she didn't keep very many ready-made things. It was all in bolt form, dry goods in bolt form, and just general dry goods, merchandise.

M: What kind of cloth did she sell the most of?

R: Well, mostly just gingham. She had nice materials and sold a lot of them too.

M: Did she keep flour in there?

R: Flour? Yes, every kind of produce, canned goods, flour, coffee, meal and sugar, and just everything.

M: Did she keep household things like needles and thread?

- R: Oh, yes, she just had everything. In other words it was just a general mercantile store.
- M: Could you buy dishes?
- R: Yes.
- M: What kind of dishes?
- R: Just plain, everyday dishes.
- M: Those would be just plain, white dishes?
- R: Yes, plain white dishes.
- M: Were there any designs on them at all?
- R: Well, there might have been a few, but they were just ordinary dishes.
- M: I see. Who did most of their shopping at the store?
- R: Well, all of the neighborhood patronized Mrs. Nettie. I went to school to her at Darracott. Oh, I loved her.
- M: Was she a teacher, too?
- R: Yes, she was a teacher. She taught at Darracott, and I went to school to her. I loved Mrs. Nettie Darracott next to my mother, and I grieved so much when she passed away a few years ago in Amory. She ran a large family shop up in Amory.
- M: Did you know Dr. Darracott very well?
- R: Of course I did. I love Dr. George Darracott. He was the sweetest thing in the world. He waited on us when we'd be sick or anything. He was the family doctor for the entire neighborhood.
- M: Did he come to your house, or did you go to his office?
- R: We'd go to his office sometimes, but he'd usually come to the house. We never would go unless we were sick enough to have him at the house.
- M: What did his office look like?
- R: It was in the Darracott Store.
- M: Did he have a table in it like doctors have today?
- R: I just can't remember. See, he sold out, left down there, and practiced medicine in Houston, Mississippi. That's where he died.
- M: When did he sell out?

R: I can't remember the date.

M: Were you young then?

R: Yes.

M: Were there any other doctors?

R: No, not in the neighborhood.

M: Dr. Moore had already died?

R: Yes, all the old doctors had passed away.

M: Was there a Dr. Dukeminier?

R: Not that I know of. I can't remember if there was a Dr. Dukeminier.

M: Did Tom Dukeminier run the store in Strongs?

R: For a short while. His older brother Algernon ran the store after Mr. Sid and Mr. Emmett Dukeminier died. So Algernon died, and I think that Tom ran the store for a short while. I am not real positive about that.

M: Did you ever take any train trips?

R: From Binford, yes. We'd go to Binford, which is close to where Burl Basinger lives, and catch the train to Aberdeen.

M: Did you take the horses up to the train?

R: Yes, we hitched them out there, and they would stand there all day.

M: Did you just tie them to a rail?

R: It was to the tree. (laughter) They didn't have hitching posts there; all they had were trees.

M: Did you ever ride on a steamboat?

R: No, I never have.

M: Have you ever seen one on the Tombigbee?

R: No, I don't remember ever seeing one.

M: Were they pretty much gone by the time that you came along?

R: Yes, because the railroad came in.

M: I am curious about any stories that your father might have told you.

R: He told so many that I can't remember them offhand. He loved the steamboats and loved Tombigbee River. Papa was a great swimmer and he wanted to teach us how to swim. He wanted us to be able to care for ourselves. He'd take us down to the Tombigbee River, at the Shaw place, and do you know that he couldn't do a thing with us.

M: Did he just throw you in?

R: We had a big time wading in the water. We would wade in the water, but we wouldn't swim.

M: Did he ever talk very much about what his parents had told him about the Civil War?

R: Oh, he remembered the Civil War some, but it is all in those old letters. It was horrible times.

M: Didn't he tell you any stories that weren't in those letters?

R: Not that I remember. It was too great a tragedy. They were all great southern people. The Shaws remain southern to their dying days. I'm southern through and through. I love Aberdeen, Monroe County, and the state of Mississippi.

M: I am glad that you did, and I am glad that you took the time to collect its history. I'd like to thank you for this interview. I appreciate the time that you have spent.

R: I am so glad that you came. I have enjoyed it. I like to talk. Papa said that my Aunt Anna would get up here talking to me, Mariah Elkins and them, and would forget to go home. He'd laugh and talk about that. I have enjoyed meeting you and am so proud of what you people are doing. I hope to be able to hear this sometime.

M: Thank you.

THTP - Oral History Interview OH 130
Interviews with
Andrew Lenoir, Jr.

conducted and edited by
Peggy Uland Anderson



Andrew Lenoir was born and raised in the community of Vinton, Mississippi on August 13, 1896 and resided there until 1938. He is one of the oldest living persons to have been born in the community and recalled shopping at the Vinton general store, a business which closed before the lifetimes of many informants. Many of the names that he can recall were only memories in the minds of younger people. He also recalls with clarity their homes and the ways that they made their livelihoods. His description of agricultural land use in the Vinton, Barton, and Colbert area is an important part of this interview.

The interviews conducted with Mr. Lenoir by Peggy U. Anderson on March 18, 1980 and March 25, 1980 were conducted in his home. The interview of June 6, 1980 was conducted at Vinton and Barton. Present at this session were Dean Anderson, Peggy Anderson, Stephen McBride, and James McClurken.

U: This is an interview with Mr. Andrew Lenoir for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by Peggy Uland at Mr. Lenoir's home on March 18, 1980. Mr. Lenoir's address is Route 2, Box 240, West Point, Mississippi 39773. His telephone number is 494-7219.

Could you tell me when you were born and where you were born?

L: Yeah. I will introduce my own name as well, to let them know who's talking. I am Andrew Lenoir. That's the way I'll start. I am Andrew Lenoir giving part of the history of the old Vinton place, as much as I know it. Of course, I was very young. I was born in 1896 on August 13. In that day, I can recall it was an old place we called Vinton owned by Mr. Henry Watson. It had much labor on it.

We didn't have any mail carriers in that day. I remember an old colored man would go to town twice a week and budget that mail and bring it out and place it in the store there. The people around would go to Vinton and get their mail. We didn't even know what a mailbox was at that time. But in time, later, a man came along introducing the mailbox. Name was Barney Cogelin.¹ My father bought one and many others. The first mail carrier on that route was named Mr. Kehl, a German man.

I grew up in that section between there and Barton Ferry. I knew the ferry very well. At that time, we used a ferry to take people to and fro across the river. We lived in that section in that county by farming. In that day, they was working oxen, mules, and horses as well. We didn't know anything about tractors at that time. You know indeed, it was kind of far back when we was using oxen. I myself grew up to be a man right in that section. I married and I grew up a family there. Later on, I moved to this place, Waverly. I lost my first wife and married a second time, and reared two more children. Adding those to my family, I reared seven children. Finally, we came here and we bought here. Let's see, we moved here in 1938. That makes around about forty-one years.

U: That's a long time.

L: Well, I been here since. I came into possession of this home, on what we called a government place. They sold it to us. There was about eight of us. We moved in here and bought these. I think there was about eight hundred and some acres of land. We bought it out. All of us come to be homeowners through the government. I never did do anything but farm for a living.

U: You mentioned Mr. Kehl, the mail carrier. Do you know where he lived? Did he live out there?

¹This is a variant pronunciation of Cogsdell.

L: No, the mail carrier lived a mile on this side of West Point. That's where he lived. It was just about a mile on the east side of West Point.

U: Did you have steel plows or were they wooden?

L: With oxen? Yeah, we was plowing with them oxen.

U: Were they steel plows or wooden plows?

L: Well, they were steel plows. We didn't have any wooden plows. I chanced to see some wooden plows, but never did use any. All the plows that I can recall in my day were steel plows. That is near about as far as I can go for being a boy. I was very, very young-- just somebody going along with my mother. I don't know how in the world I can think of things back there so well at that age, and I can't think of things I did last year. (laughter)

U: Things impress you more when you are a kid, I guess.

L: Well, most anybody can think back in your childhood days and think of a whole lot of things you did, while things you did after you became grown you have almost forgotten.

U: I've heard that. You said that this post office was in the store?

L: Yeah, in a little store.

U: Could you tell me about the store, or where it was?

L: The store was at Vinton. It was a large store. It was sitting east and west. The door was in the west because the main road went along by the store. It was a pretty large store. I didn't know the name of the man who run that store, but I did know he had one leg and a peg on. But his name, I didn't know. He had a stick for a leg. I didn't know his name, but he didn't have but one leg I'm sure.

This man who owned that place raised cattle, hogs, and goats. He didn't raise any sheep, but he raised a lot of goats, cattle, and hogs. He raised plenty of that kind of stuff.

U: Did the same man who worked in the store own it?

L: Well, the man who worked there was just a clerk managing the store, but he wasn't the owner of the land or the store either. The store belonged to old man Henry Watson. He was just managing the store. Henry Watson reared a lot of cows, a lot of cows, back yonder in that day. It was a regular ranch. He owned two places. One was in Vinton, and one was down near Cox's. We called it Cox's, near Barton Ferry. You would go down the road by his next place. He owned two places. He was a rich old man. He come from up north somewhere. I don't know where. So, he died. He left two sons. One was deformed. He never did do anything. Well, he wasn't in a

wheelchair, but he may have as well been in one. He'd just sit in the chair. He lived to be twenty or thirty years old.

U: Do you know where this Henry Watson lived?

L: Oh, yeah. I knew where he was living. Henry Watson, the man that owned the place, was living not far from that store. He lived right there on that place. Then, he lost his wife, and he hired a nurse to take care of the little deformed boy. She was a white lady named Lucy Natchell.² She nursed that boy for years before he died. Eventually, he died. The owner of that place moved down on the lower place where I'm talking about, what we call Cox's place. He moved down there, and he lived down there for a good many years. I think the old man was living down there when he died. Then when he died, he had a son who took over, Henry Watson, Jr. Then he died, so the children have all of it now.

U: Do you remember anything they sold in it?

L: Can I remember anything they sold in it?

U: Yeah. What kind of things they had there?

L: Well, one thing they had there was groceries. It wasn't a dry goods store. It was a grocery store. They sold groceries in that store. It was a grocery store.

U: So, you could buy meal and flour there?

L: Oh, yeah. You see, in that time they had a gin on that place, too, not far from the store.

U: Where is that? I haven't heard about that.

L: Cotton gin. Yeah, they had a cotton gin there. Henry Watson used to farm. He never did fool with very much cotton. He just raised cattle, hogs, and great acres of these sunflowers. He raised them things by the acres. He just hired people to cut the heads off every year. He had hogs so fat that they couldn't hardly walk. He would just plant acres of corn, let the corn mature, and turn the hogs in it. They'd go on out there and eat it. That's the way he farmed. He just raised watermelons, and watermelons. That's right. He didn't fool with very much cotton, but some of his people raised cotton. He didn't like cotton.

U: Could you give me an idea of what the outside of the general store looks like? Did it have chimneys or windows?

L: It didn't have a chimney. It had a flue as we called it. It had a flue in it. The windows wasn't glass windows; they were shutter

²Also spelled Natcher, Natchez, Nacher, Natural.

windows. You just shut them and latch them. They had a way of latching them on the inside. That's the kind of windows they had.

U: Was it plank?

L: Yeah, it was wood. It wasn't glass. Didn't have any glass windows, then.

U: Was the building log or plank?

L: All the building was plank; wasn't brick. There weren't many brick buildings back in that day. They was just all plank.

U: Did it stand up off the ground?

L: Oh, yeah. It was off the ground. It had pillars under it. It was up off the ground.

U: Do you remember what the pillars were made out of?

L: Well, they had to be brick, I imagine. In that day, that's what they would use. If they made the pillars, they would use brick. Eventually, they got concrete, you see. That was a step higher, but the first thing was brick.

U: Did the man who worked in the store live in it, or did he live someplace else?

L: Now, that's one thing I can't answer definitely. I don't know whether that man lived in that store, and yet it seems to me like he did. I just don't know. It's been a long time. I don't know where he had a house to stay there. The boss man would stay in this house set a distance from the store. The colored people was in the other houses I knew. I didn't know of another house there. I just couldn't say exactly. I would much rather believe he stayed in it, but I just won't say definite.

U: Was there a rail or bar somewhere where you could tie up horses if you rode a horse to the store, or took a wagon?

L: Like if you go to the store?

U: Yeah.

L: What they call a hitch place. Well, I don't remember a hitch place. It could have been someway, but I can't remember a hitch place. It wasn't too much riding then. People was walking. We was living down next to the low place what we call Cox's, and we would walk from there up to Vinton to get the mail or haul things. If we wanted to go to the store, we'd walk up there. I'd walk up there with my mother for company.

U: Do you remember what Henry Watson's house looked like?

L: Well, yes. It was a big plank house. It was wood. Painted white. It was a big old house. I don't know if that old house is sitting there now. I believe some of it is up there now. After the boy died and the nurse died, too, there wasn't ever anyone else who lived in that house anymore. I imagine it is all but rotten down by now. That is, if it is there.

U: Was it built in a square shape?

L: No, it wasn't in a square shape. That house was kind of oblong. It wasn't square. It was just kind of long.

U: Did he have a barn or a smokehouse or any kind of outbuilding around the house?

L: Yeah. He had a barn. Course, on the north side of that house, he had a lot where he kept some stock there. He had a barn down in there in that bottom.

U: In a low place?

L: Well, the house was on the hill and the barn was kind of down there. It wasn't where the water was back in there, but it was lower than the house place. The house was built on a hill.

U: Sort of north or northwest?

L: The barn was north of the house. The house was south of the barn because it was up on the hill. Down the hill where the well was and the barn, it dropped there, and it was very low.

This colored man would go to town and get the mail and bring it out there to the store. He wouldn't go to town everyday. I think they said he went once or twice a week to bring the people's mail out. Then people would go up there and get their mail.

U: Did the man who worked in that store give you your mail? Did he work as a postal clerk?

L: Well, yeah. You see he was the manager of the store, and when the people went there he'd see to them getting their mail.

U: You mentioned the nurse that took care of Mr. Watson's son. Lucy Natcher?

L: Lucy Natchell.

U: Do you know where she's from? Is there a Natcher family that lived out there?

L: I didn't know any of her relations. All I knew when I come to know her was that she was nursing that boy. She nursed him for years and years and then she died. They got a colored woman then to nurse

him; her name was Maudie Strong. She nursed him until he died. She lived longer than he did. Henry Watson gave her that home to live in as long as she lived. She lived right there until she died.

U: Could you tell me a little bit about the house you were born in?

L: The house who was born in?

U: That you were born in.

L: Me? No, I can't get nothing on the house. That's too far back. My father bought a place. He went to buying him some land from this Henry Watson that we was talking about. Well, my father didn't buy this place here in Waverly. My father bought the place where we moved from. My father died in 1938, and we moved down here in 1938. Well, he purchased the place, and he reared us up there on that place. He lost it in a way. He never did redeem it, so the children just went on out. He had four boys and one girl. They went to vouching for themselves.

U: What were your parents' names?

L: I'm named after my dad. That's right. I'm named after my dad. My mother was Luiza Lucas; she was a Lucas before she married. That was my mother.

U: Do you know where they are from? Are they from the Bartons Ferry area?

L: Who? My parents?

U: Your parents.

L: Yeah. They was reared up over back in there. Yes, sir. They was. Yeah, my mother had three brothers. There was three brothers of them, and two sisters. All of them are dead. That's right.

U: Did you ever know any of your grandparents?

L: Yes, I knew my grandfather well. He was named Selvin Lenoir.

U: Did he live there with you?

L: He lived there on the other place with my father. My father was his son.

U: Was he a farmer, too?

L: Yeah, he was a farmer. Well, my father farmed, but really his profession was schoolteaching.

U: Where did he teach school?

- L: Well, my father taught school in Clay County. He taught school in Monroe County. He taught school in Alabama, and I don't know where else. He was a very, very good teacher. He taught school there.
- U: Did he ever teach school in the Barton/Vinton area?
- L: In the Barton area? Well, I'll say yes because he taught there in that area in what we call Town Creek for years. Reverend Mitchell is older than I am. I don't know if Reverend Mitchell could remember things way back there because sometimes his mind gets flashy.
- U: Do you know where he grew up?
- L: Yeah. We was reared up right near together. Might well say right in the same vicinity.
- U: Could you tell me where his house was and what it looked like?
- L: Well, let's see. Now you done been. . . . I'm going to try and give you a little direction if I can. You've been to Barton Ferry?
- U: Yes.
- L: On that road you pass two churches. Do you remember? One on the left and one on the right.
- U: Town Creek and London Chapel?
- L: That's right. Well, just before London, there is a turn that goes south. You've seen that road that goes south. I'm fixing to try and locate it right for you. Well, before you get to that turn, on your left going to the ferry or your right coming this way, was that old house place to the left there. He was reared up right back over behind that place there. That is where he was reared up at. He was reared up in a plank house with three or four rooms. That's all the kind of houses they had in those days. Now and then you saw a brick house back there. We did have one house built that had what we called a stick chimney. Did you ever see anything like that?
- U: No, what's that?
- L: Well, a stick chimney. . . . They split out little strips about three or four feet long. They'd stack them, and they would take grass and place it on those sticks and then take clay mud and then mortar it with it. Those things would last pretty good. You make a fire in them.
- U: I'd think they'd burn up.
- L: No. They would have the back of it and the front brick, but all the other would be wood. But as you said, I always figured they was dangerous. You couldn't make a fire in them just like you could in

a brick chimney because when that thing would get hot, that wood would burn way up there beside your house. Some men could build them things, and they'd look alright.

U: Whose house had one of those on it?

L: Well, the Shirleys had one. They had one of those stick chimneys. They had grass plaited in it, and had it plastered with clay. They stayed with that thing a long time. Couldn't make no big fire in them because you'd burn them up. A good many people had them. I knew another man that had one, too. I think his name was Pat Hampton. He had a stick chimney. It looks peculiar. It's funny how people come along. They come from a long ways. They come from the oxen on up, and come from a stick chimney. That's right. No, it had just a few brick to keep them tearing the back out; all the rest is dirt.

U: You said Will Shirley's house. Was that house in the same place where Pinkie Lee lives now?

L: Yes. The house was right there.

U: What did the house look like? Was it plank or log?

L: It was plank.

U: Was it two rooms or one?

L: One room. That's right, one room.

U: Was the house that Joe Mitchell lived in two rooms with an open hall between them?

L: No, Joe Mitchell's home, that he was reared in, wasn't open. It was closed up. His grandfather was Henry Thomas, and his grandmother's name was America Thomas. It was a pretty big old house. They had probably a couple bedrooms, kitchen and so on. It was a big old house, but it wasn't no open hall; they joined together. When you went in the door, you went in the house. That's the way the house was.

U: You mentioned Pat Hampton. Do you know where he lived?

L: Well, I know where he lived, but I know I'm not able to describe that place to you. Yeah, I know where he lived.

U: Could you try even if I get confused?

L: That's hard for me to describe to you because I don't know where. . . . Have you been around concob settlements?

U: Yes.

- L: Have you come through Vinton and come on around and then turned and went on east and west to. . . .
- U: Go west to Crecy Gladney's house?
- L: Yeah. Crecy Gladney's. You got it right. That's where it is.
- U: Okay. We are going that way.
- L: Well, old man Pat Hampton lived to the right on a road we used to call going to George Darragus's.³ He was a country doctor. Old man Pat Hampton stayed on that road.
- U: Is that close to the old Concob?
- L: Well, it's a pretty good ways up from there.
- U: Where Pat Hampton lives is that road running north up to the doctor's place?
- L: Yes. We could go up that road and go on up to Dr. George Darragus's. The rest of that road didn't go straight on up to Aberdeen. It was kind of a cut road through somewhere. We'd always go that other road to Aberdeen, but we wouldn't hardly go that way to go to George Darragus's.
- U: If I was at Will Shirley's house on the Barton Ferry Road, and I was going to go straight down to where the ferry was, do you remember any houses that used to be along that part of the road between Will Shirley's and the river?
- L: And the river? Well, yes. I remember one house that was. . . . Do you remember seeing a house not so far from Will Shirley's going down to Barton Ferry to the right? I haven't been down there in so long. No, that house is not there because it got burned down. That's right. It is not there.
- U: I know where you mean, though.
- L: Well, one used to be there.
- U: Do you know who lived there?
- L: Well, I know who built it. It was built out of some nice pine logs. Man named Atkin. He was a white fellow. He bought that place there, thirty or forty acres in there somewhere. He built him a log house. He built it very cute. He lived there for some time. Then another man came into possession of it named Cal Phillips. That's when it got burned down. It got burned down there with Cal Phillips; Cal Phillips and his wife, both of them, got burned in

³This is a variant pronunciation of Darracott.

there. Then as we go on down, there's another hill before you get down to that river. A house sat up on that hill.

U: On the right side or the left side?

L: To the right going to the river. The man who lived there went by the name Trannie Wilson.

U: What did that house look like?

L: Well, it was just a double wooden house with an open hall. That's the way it was. You could go through it. Then there was another house; you couldn't see it. Right before you get to the. . . There was a white man's family, who stayed to the left before you get to that river, called Uithovens.

U: Real close down toward the river?

L: Have you heard of them?

U: I've heard the name.

L: That's right. The Uithovens stayed there.

U: What did that house look like and where was it exactly?

L: Well, it was a pretty big old house. It was a pretty good old house in them times. It was a pretty big old house. Then there was another house not far from there. Man lived in that house for a long time named Frank Andrews. He was an Andrews. On down going to the river, to the left was a hill. You're not far from the river there; there's a hill to the left over there. There used to be a house up on that hill. People lived there.

U: Do you remember any of their names?

L: I know one man that lived in it. He was named March Montgomery. All up and down that road there used to be houses. I haven't been down to that river since I left from over there. That's been forty years ago. I've near about f gotten how things looked down there.

U: If I was standing almost right at the ferry landing, there is a little hill to my left as I face the river. Was there a house right there?

L: Yeah. There was a house right there.

U: Whose house was that?

L: The man who lived in that was a Cogelin. He lived there. It belonged to him. He managed that ferry there for a long time. He lost his eyesight, and he lived there until he died.

- U: Was it a relative of Barney Cogelin who sold you the mailbox?
- L: Barney Cogelin? Yes, they was brothers. Yeah, he and Barney were brothers.
- U: Do you know where his brother Barney lived?
- L: Well, Barney lived in one of those houses that I told you about. He lived in that open house, before Trannie Wilson lived in that house.
- U: Oh, it's the same house?
- L: Same house. Barney Cogelin lived in that, too. Yeah. That's right.
- U: If I'm standing on the Barton Ferry Road and Trannie Wilson's house is on my right, there is a dirt road that goes to my left that goes up to where the Uithovens live.
- L: Right.
- U: Where would Frank Andrews live if I was going up that road?
- L: Frank Andrews's old place is nowhere from it. It is just sitting over there to the left. When the house was there, we could see it from the road.
- U: From the road that went to the Uithovens?
- L: From the road that was going to the river. You could look over there and see it. It wasn't far from the Uithovens.
- U: But you could see it from the road to the river?
- L: Oh, yeah. From the river road.
- U: What did his place look like?
- L: Well, it was a double house, plank house. Well, it wasn't an open hall. It was three or four rooms, I guess. It was a pretty big old house. In that day they built houses with big rooms. They don't build them kind of rooms now. They just build tens and twelves and so on. But in that day, they'd build a house sixteen by sixteen, and that's a big room.
- U: Do you know what Mr. Andrews did for a living? Was he a farmer?
- L: Yeah, he was a farmer. He farmed. He was a good old potato raiser, too. He could keep potatoes sound and good when nobody else could. He'd just go out there and get him some cornstalks and put them over them potatoes. Throw some dirt on them and wrap the top of them with a sack or something. Turn a basket or box or something down on there. They'd stay there all the winter.

U: Did people go there and buy?

L: Yeah, sure. He was the man for seed potatoes pretty well through that community. He'd sell potatoes, seed potatoes. That's right.

U: Do you remember anyone named Keller?

L: Keller? Yeah. Know him now. He's still there in West Point. He's got two sons; one of them run the store there.

U: Do you know where he lived out there?

L: Well, Keller lived on this place we were talking about, the Atkin place. He lived there, too. He lived on that place a few years.

U: What is his first name?

L: His first name? You know, I can't give you any other name. All I know is Keller. I just know him. I never did worry about that other name. (laughter) That's right. He lived around there. He used to live on that place. Yeah, he lived there awhile on that place. I don't know. You might ask me somebody else. I might know something about somebody else.

U: You mentioned the Uithoven family. Do you remember any of them?

L: The Uithoven family. Yeah. I know Uithovens. You've been back there where the house is. Uithoven was a Hollander or something. I don't know, a foreigner. Well anyway, he's an old foreign doctor. He wore wooden shoes. (laughter) He was a very fine old fellow, but he was funny. He'd keep you laughing all the time. He was just funny. He could help some things. He didn't have an office or anything down there. You'd just go down there. He had some medicine, pills and things. People would go to him. People would say he'd help them. I don't know; I never did go to him. Yes, I did too. I went to him once. I remember I was working hard and sawing these blocks of what we call pulpwood. Lifting so many of them things kind of hurt my back. I went down and told him about it. He give me something. I don't know what it was. It was some kind of oil or something. He told me to put it in coffee and drink it. (laughter) He said, "Anytime you get ready to take a gulp put it in coffee and drink it." Well, I did. I guess it helped me.

I know one thing. I had a mule, and that mule had a bruised knee. Her leg just swole up. Oh, it hurt her. The mule just lay out just like she wanted to die. It hurt her so bad. I went down to his home and told him about it. He made up some salves and told me to go back home and rub the salve all over that leg; I did. I'm telling you true. That stuff just drew the inflammation out of there. It just come out and run down on the ground. Drew it out through the pores. That leg went down, too, and got well.

U: He was good then?

- L: He sure was. He did a good job that time. That's right.
- U: Do you remember what his house looked like? I think it has changed a lot.
- L: I haven't been there hardly since he died, and he's been dead a good while. The first home was just a big old plank house, built up. I don't know how it looks now.
- U: When you remember it, when he was living there, was it one-story or taller?
- L: Yeah, one-story. It was one-story.
- U: Did it have brick chimneys?
- L: Oh, yeah. It had brick chimneys.
- U: Do you remember how many of them there were?
- L: How many of them in that family?
- U: Yes.
- L: Well, let's see now. I maybe can get them all. I don't know. He had one boy named David, and he had one named Guise. Well, he had some girls, too. He had a couple girls. Anyway, I'd say he had four or five kids. He had David, Guise, and there is another boy. I know one of the girls; I know her husband. One of the Rhea boys married one of them.
- U: Did you ever know anyone named Coltrane?
- L: Coltrane? Where does that Coltrane live?
- U: I don't know. I just heard someone say that they thought there had been a family down there named Coltrane.
- L: Coltrane? Well, that one got me. I can't give you an account of that one.
- U: Okay. Do you know anyone whose last name was Moore?
- L: Moore? Where does he live? Out on that road, too?
- U: Maybe closer to the general store on the Vinton road?
- L: I know Moores alright. I just want to see where they is located. I know some Moores, but I don't know any Moores that live down near the river.
- U: Were there any that lived on the Vinton/Aberdeen Road below the general store?

L: The Moores?

U: Yes.

L: Do you know where Preacher Shirley's wife lives? There's a road goes down that way. I know you've seen that road. At that time, we used to live all in there. You didn't see all that much timber. You could just see everywhere. That thing just grew up that way in the forty years since we left from over in there. There was a set of Moores that lived right over the fence there south from Mrs. Shirley--Grant Moore, Ida Moore and their children.

U: Did you ever know anyone whose name was Trotter?

L: Trotters? Yeah. Trotters is up above me. Trotters is up more in the Concob settlement than they was back down in here on us. There was a one named. . . . They all called him Boy Trotter, and his daddy was a Trotter. Well, those are about the only men I know named Trotter. I don't believe I ever knew but two men named Trotter.

U: Did you ever know a woman named Parthenia Trotter?

L: Parfenia?

U: Parthenia.

L: No, I didn't get her. I missed her.

U: Have you ever heard of her before?

L: Well, I don't know. I might know that woman, but I can't think of all these things. I can't recognize her right now.

U: Did you ever know anyone named Poss?

L: Poss? That's a man, isn't it?

U: Yes.

L: Poss? Yeah, I knew Poss. Poss was a white man. Poss lived right up. . . . When you turn up that road up from the Shirleys, there is a road that sits up there to the right.

U: Okay. It's not there anymore.

L: Yeah. The house that Poss lived in is not there; this is a new one, but that is the place.

U: Okay. If I am going up the Vinton/Aberdeen Road past Mrs. Shirley's, would I go right?

L: You go right.

- U: Would it be before where Peter Montgomery lives now?
- L: Yes, it's on this side of Peter Montgomery. It's on this side south of Peter Montgomery.
- U: There was a road that went to the river from there?
- L: Yes, you could have gone that way, but they didn't try it. That's really where Frank Andrews would go to his home right through that way. That's where his road was going down there where the Uithovens was. That's where his road would go, right across down in there.
- U: And Poss lived down in there?
- L: Poss lived nearby where that house is sitting now. Can you remember one sitting there now?
- U: An old one that is falling down?
- L: The one Poss lived in wasn't very far from that place, just a little bit farther east.
- U: What was it like?
- L: It was just an old plank house. Poss stayed up there a long time. Yeah, I knew Poss.
- U: Did anyone live in that house that is still standing there? Right next to the Poss house, there is one still standing. Was that there when you were young?
- L: No, that house that you see now is a newly built house. It wasn't there. Poss was just living down there in a double house. That was the road Frank Andrews went on.
- U: Do you know when the general store closed in Vinton?
- L: Vinton? No, I don't know when that closed. I couldn't give it definitely, but I know about when it went out of business. They quit fooling with the store business there. When we were children, Santa Claus would bring us cap pistols, which were these little old cannons that we could shoot. We would shoot out our caps and what-not. We would go there, and they had plenty of caps for us. That thing went out of business along in there. I just couldn't tell the year or nothing. Couldn't tell when they went out of business.
- U: What happened to the building after it closed?
- L: That old building sat there for years. People lived in it for a house. A white family lived in it by the name--what was that white fellows name--Perkins. Perkins lived in that old store house for a house.

- U: Did he change it when he lived in it?
- L: No, he didn't do nothing. I don't know what they done inside, but there wasn't no changes made outside. They stuck around in it. White fellow by the name Perkins lived in that house a good while.
- U: Was there ever a house just north of there, north of the general store on the same side of the main road?
- L: No, I can't remember a house on the north side. I'll tell you where two houses were.⁴ You know where Peter Montgomery lives, and Warddell Moore. Warddell's Uncle Jim Moore, his daddy's brother, lived right along in there in a log house for a long time.
- U: Where Warddell's is now?
- L: Yeah. Then as you go down south, before you get to the next house, to the left there were two houses right along there. One, an old double house, wasn't far off the road. One, a plank house, was sitting back down farther. Then there was another old double one farther down back on the same side.
- U: Are these other houses on the west side of the road?
- L: On the west side of the road. It was a big old house, but it wasn't but just two big old rooms and a open hall.
- U: When you say a double house do you just mean two rooms together?
- L: Just mean two rooms. They can have a hall between them or not. It's just two rooms.
- U: If you took a room like this and divided it?
- L: Yeah, that's how. That's a double house. If it's two rooms, call it double.
- U: Do you know who lived in any of those?
- L: Well, I can think of one of them houses. As I said, Warddell's Uncle Jim Moore stayed over on the right side. On the left side, there was a woman named Diddie Keaton. She lived to be an old lady, but she was crippled. I don't know what was ailing her or how her feet got tangled up like that. That's the way she traveled. She'd work, and she lived a long time. Her feet was right behind one another just that way.
- U: And she could get around?
- L: Work, yes. She was named Diddie Keaton. She stayed in that house

⁴See addendum to interviews for additional information.

over there. Who stayed in that house back down farther? I know who stayed in that house, but I can't think. Who stayed in that house? Well, I do know one family who stayed there. He was named Jeff Daughtery. The next one down farther was named Bill Moore. Really his name was William Moore, but we called him Bill.

U: Do you know where the cemetery is? Is that on the west side of the road by the general store?

L: Oh, yeah. Going to Aberdeen it is to the left, but coming back it's to the right, on that hill there.

U: If I was going to Aberdeen and the cemetery is on my left, was there ever a house north of that?

L: Well, the only house I know that was built out there is out there now. That's Henry Watson III's, and he's dead.

U: That's kind of behind the cemetery.

L: That's kind of behind over there.

U: Do you remember any north of there going up the road?

L: No. When you get to that cemetery, I can't think of any houses up there. Farther back over on the same place, there is a little creek over there, and there were two or three houses over there.

U: But there weren't any between the cemetery and the road that you turn down to go to Crecy Gladney's?

L: All you want to know is there any houses along there? Well, yes, there was some along there. When you got along up there, there used to be a schoolhouse, a church you call it, right on the corner where you turn to go down to Crecy Gladney's. Right there is where the white people had a church. It sat there for years. Fact is, they kept it for a country school, too. They taught school in it for years. They taught school in that church.

Then the man that lived below that church was named Dennis Wilson. Then right across the road from that to the right, there was a Wilson. It was a brother of the Wilson that lived over there. I think it was Doc Wilson or Tode Wilson. I don't remember but one house being on the left going north. Dennis was near the schoolhouse, and the schoolhouse was there.

U: You don't remember any house between Dennis's house and the cemetery.

L: No. I can't remember. I don't think there was a house ever built in there, not in that time. On both sides of the road after you get along where the cemetery is, there was no more building in my day until we got up there near where I said that church was. Dennis Wilson, Doc Wilson, Tode Wilson, all them Wilsons lived up there. That's right.

U: Did you ever know a man named Levi Hollins?

L: Yeah. Sure I knew Levi Hollins. Knew his children. Had sons and daughters. What do you want to know about Levi?

U: Where he lived? What he did?

L: Where he lived? Well, he was a farmer. Levi was a farmer. He was an old board river, paling river. In that day, people would rive boards out to top houses. Rive palings out and make gardens and fenced-in yards and things. See, you don't know about that. (laughter) Levi was a farmer. That's what he'd do. He stayed up there where a lot of chestnut wood was. People would want posts, and that chestnut wood makes good posts. He'd get out chestnut posts for people and so on.

U: Do you know where the house was that he lived in?

L: Well, we just called it up there in the hills. I never did go to that house. I couldn't spot that house. I knew about where he was back up in there, but I couldn't say definite. He was up there in them hills.

U: Close to the river?

L: You go up and down in the hollows and things. You can stand up on the hill and look way down in there. Looks like if you go down in there, you couldn't get back up. Yeah, he was an old farmer. Levi Hollins had some grown sons. I knew all his children.

U: Is any of his family still alive and living around here?

L: No, the Hollins all left from here. Some died and some went up north, somewhere up in there. The old man died. Isn't much I can tell you about Levi. I knew him alright. I knew he was a farmer. I knew he used to get out posts and rive boards for people. If anybody wanted some boards, they'd tell him to rive them boards. He'd rive them out, palings or anything, posts. He'd get them out for them.

U: You mentioned that there was a cotton gin near the general store in Vinton?

L: In Vinton? Yeah.

U: Where was that?

L: Well, that gin was kind of south of the store. It used to sit right out south of the store in that field.

U: On the same side of the main road?

L: On your right going to Aberdeen.

U: Would it be just above where Tom Cooperwood lives now?

L: Well, you don't have any idea where that old store was, and it done grewed up so in there that I can't hardly tell you about the distance that thing was from it. The general store was just straight across from where that road goes into Watson's new home over there. It was just straight across over there on the east side of the road.

U: What was that gin like? Was it horse or mule or did they have a steam engine?

L: Yes.

U: Was it in a building?

L: Yeah. You see, Vinton was kind of a little old town or something. It was where the people would go to the store, go get their mail and so on. I don't know all these things. I knew right smart of people alright. A lot of them are dead and a lot of them living.

U: I've never seen a cotton gin of that time period. Could you tell me what one would look like? If I just walked up to it, what would it look like?

L: I'll try to introduce both kinds to you. In the first cotton gin that was introduced to people, they had to drive up to the gin with a bale of cotton and take a basket along with them. They'd just dip their cotton out and pour it over in the hopper in the gin. Then the men would have to go over in the press box. Two men would be over there walking that cotton, packing it. They did that for a good while. Eventually, they improved them. They put a sucker on. When they got that sucker, it was so much better. They could gin so much more cotton faster. When they have a sucker, you drive under it. Turn that air on that thing, and it'd suck that cotton off that wagon. Then, they improved the press as well. They'd have two men in the box when they was unloading with their hands, but when they went to using the suckers, they had to steam press. It had a lever on it. You could pull it. When so much cotton got in the press, then you'd pull down. That thing would go down and mash her down. Then you'd raise it back up. Then the cotton lint would continue to roll in. Well, a man quit walking it then. The press would just press all them old bales down, and make them weigh 500, 600, or 700 pounds.

U: Was this cotton gin that was at Vinton a steam kind? Did it have a steam press on it?

L: Oh, yeah. It was steam. Facts, you'd have to have steam. It'd have to be steam. Horses couldn't hardly gin cotton much. You can make sorghum molasses with horses, but they'd pull out ginning with them. You got to have a steam to run them saws. A mule wouldn't run them saws fast enough to cut it.

U: Was it in a building?

- L: Yeah. It would be just like this room here. You'd have a shed like that porch out there. Your sucker would be fixed out there. They would drive out there under that porch and use that sucker. The cotton would come over and go into the press. Then you'd press it. Then when you'd get it pressed, you're going to have to buckle it. They put about six belts on it, about as wide as this is.
- U: About an inch wide?
- L: Yes. They would have that thing pressed. Then they'd put them belts on and hook them. Then they'd turn it loose. When they turned it loose, it would spread and them belts would be just as tight as you could get them, but you couldn't bust them.
- U: What were the belts made out of?
- L: Well, steel--little old thin steel things.
- U: How would you hook them?
- L: Well, they'd have a hook. They'd make a hook, cut a hole in this thing right here, and it had a thing you could just bend those old steels like you wanted. Put them on there as tight as you could with your hand. They had things with a hole in it. You could just put them on them belts, and then pull them down with your hands tight as you can get, slip them on sideways and it'd catch. That's the way they'd do it. Then turn them things loose. Turn the steam off them. Then turn it out of the press. That would be a bale of cotton then.
- U: Heavy?
- L: Yeah, heavy, heavy sack.
- U: Was that building high off the ground?
- L: No, it wasn't built off the ground. It was built on the ground because you had engine works all around here, and the engine works was on the ground. It was just a big shed over your engines and whatnot.
- U: Was it a wood floor?
- L: No, dirt floor. There was no wood floor. That's right, a dirt floor. You'd cement your big engine in. You'd dig a hole and pour in so much cement and fasten it down with cement in the ground. Lock them down. Yeah, that's the way they'd do.
- U: Would you use any brick in a building like that?
- L: No, didn't use no brick around a gin. If you use anything, you'd use cement. You need something that would hold fast and hold tight, and be hard to break. Bricks are too soft.

- U: Might it have a porch on it that might have brick?
- L: No. Wouldn't have no brick about it, just cement and dirt.
- U: When they take the cottonseed out, what do they put that in?
- L: Well, I know you've seen people gather beans. Well, those hulls go one way and the beans go another way. That's just the way cotton does it. It runs through them little saws and it cuts the seed out. They got a box built over there and them seeds blow over there, and your lint blows back over here in the press. They got it fixed.
- U: Would you get that cottonseed then?
- L: Yeah. You get that cotton.
- U: Did you get the seed as well?
- L: Yeah, get the seed. They'd have a big box built like up here on top of this house, about as wide as the top of that ceiling there.
- U: About four or five feet?
- L: Yeah. Then, they'd bring it down sharp. You'd drive right under that thing. It's got a drop door under it and a latch. You'd drive your wagon right under that thing and unlatch it, and down your seeds would come, providing you don't sell them. But if you sell them, they go on over in the pen.
- U: So, on one side of the building you could drive up with your wagon and the sucker would take the cotton out, and on the other side you could drive around and get the seed.
- L: Yeah, drive around and get your seed and then drive around to the shed. After they'd weigh it, put it on your wagon and then you go on to town with it.
- U: I have a lot of other questions, but it will take so long I think we should do that another time, if that's alright.
- L: Well, you've got some pretty good ones.
- U: Well I've got some more, but I think we should save them for another time. I'd like to thank you very much for what we've done tonight.
- L: Well, thank you and you come back sometime and we'll finish up. Try to dig up some more.
- U: Thank you very much.

- U: This is an interview with Andrew Lenoir for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by Peggy Uland at Mr. Lenoir's home. His address is Route 2, Box 240, West Point, Mississippi 39773. The date is March 25, 1980. Mr. Lenoir's telephone number is 494-7219.
- L: That's right 7219, and that's it.
- U: Last time we were talking about some houses that were along the road that goes down to Barton Ferry, and you mentioned a house that March Montgomery lived in. Can you tell me where that one is and what that was like?
- L: That's the house March Montgomery lived in? March Montgomery was in the family with me; he was an uncle by marriage. He was living down there. Going east, to the left before you get down to the river, it's a hill up there. That house sat on that hill up there. March Montgomery lived there for a few years. He had a family. His wife was my aunt; his children and we were first cousins. At that time, I think he had about three boys and one girl--four children. After March Montgomery moved from that place, he was around and about there, but I can't recall where did he live when he left from down in the place we called Colbert. I don't know where he went.
- U: Do you remember what that house looked like?
- L: Well, yes, it was an old double house. It was a plank, wood house with two rooms; I think it had dropped sheds on the back, on the west side. The front was facing east, and it was north and south. It was kind of a long house, but it wasn't an open hall; it was together.
- U: Did it have a fireplace in it?
- L: Yes, he had a fireplace; that was his heat.
- U: Was there just one or where was it?
- L: One chimney, one fireplace, yes. Well, yes, I'll say one. I can't recognize but one.
- U: Do you remember what room it was in?
- L: I think it was in the center of that house. The chimney was in the center. That's just about close as I can get to that old house. When he moved from there, I don't know where he went to.
- U: When you're going down the road and you see that hill that that house sits on, is it right on the edge of the hill close to the road or does it sit farther back on a ridge?

- L: Yeah, right back on that ridge. You see, it's a bottom there. You can see the drop from the hill as you are going to the river. That's a very high hill, and that's where the house was sitting.
- U: Were there any other houses along that ridge?
- L: Well, it was another house on the right going to the river. It wasn't a double house. It was just an old, big, sixteen by sixteen room, and it had a drop shed on the back of it, on the south side, which they called the kitchen. Who stayed in that one was old man Pat Hampton. They lived there for sometime on that road going to the river.
- U: On the right side?
- L: Yeah, on the right going.
- U: How far down to the river was that one?
- L: It wasn't too far because it was just kind of up on the hill back. . . . You know there's a hill on the right as well as on the left to get down there. That's kind of a hilly place in there. He wasn't too far from the river, but he wasn't down to the river. He was kind of back up on the hill. That hill wasn't too far from the ferry.
- U: Were there any other houses along the ridge that March Montgomery's house was on?
- L: No, that was the only house sitting on that hill where March Montgomery lived. There was just one sitting on that hill. I can remember that one that old man Pat Hampton lived in--the old man and his wife and one son.
- U: Do you know what Pat Hampton did for a living when he lived down there?
- L: Farmed, that's all people did here besides make some bread. (laughter) Scratching and turning the soil. You ain't farming. I imagine he farmed back in that Colbert bottom as we called it. That house was on the Colbert side. Also, the Montgomery's house was on the Colbert side as far as that's concerned, but it was just a little farther down.
- U: Where is Colbert?
- L: Well, Colbert, as we call that place, is joining that place. It's close to the river. It's on the right going to the river, as I said, as long as you're back up here. It's hilly back up here, and over behind those hills it's a lowland we call Colbert bottoms. The old Barton Ferry place joins that place. I don't know who owns the Colbert place; I wasn't able to get that. I don't know who owned it, but I guess it's named after some of the owners--true enough.

U: Was that bottom down in there open or were there a lot of trees?

L: Open in that day. You could go along the road in that day, and you didn't see many trees. Of course, people were farming pretty well, on the roadsides and whatnot. Yeah, he farmed. Old man March Montgomery farmed; Pat Hampton farmed; and the man who had the ferry in charge farmed. Of course, running the ferry was the way he made his living. He did a little farming--a little day work around. Raised peanuts and watermelons and things of that kind, but mostly he relied upon the ferry; that is mostly what he depended on.

U: Could you tell me what the Barton Ferry was like?

L: Well, I think I can describe it to you. It was something made like a bridge. It floated well where the water couldn't get at it and sink it. Had a great windlass with a cable on it on this side. It would take the end of the cable and take it across the river and tie it to a tree over there. If you wanted to, you could use the windlass by winding off or winding up, either way you wanted to do, or you could just take the rope and just pull on that rope. Your feet would look like they skeeted on the water. Then you would go on across over there. Come back the same way. Two cars would probably be on it, or a wagon, or a couple of wagons sometimes.

U: Was it flat?

L: Oh yeah, flat just like this floor. Had to drive up on it at the end so the wagon or the car or whatever it was wouldn't get stalled. You could just drive on it level and go on up there.

U: Did it have sides on it?

L: Yeah, had sides on it, just like a bridge has arms on both sides. Yeah, that is right. At that time, there was two ferries. I was living up there because I was born up there and reared there. In 1938 I moved down here in this section. There was one right down here at one time as well. So, people would come this way and go to Columbus; people would come and go to Barton Ferry and go to Columbus. Either one of them would take you to Columbus, put you over on the other side.

U: Do you know who made the Barton ferry? Who built it?

L: Well, directly I don't know because one or two of them wore out; they had to make some new ones. The bottoms would rot. They would have to make some new ones. Who built those things, I don't know. Well, I guess the men who build bridges could build them. They weren't all that hard to make. They would make it on the ground, and when they get through with it, they would get enough power to get it in the water.

U: Have you ever seen a steamboat?

L: Yes, I saw a steamboat running right down Tombigbee River. It wasn't no great large boat, but it was a boat. I done forgot what the name of that thing was, but look like to me it was named Lilly something. I can't name it directly, but it was some kind of Lilly. We had an old boat that used to run down that river, and plus that they would raft logs down that river to certain places. They would cut logs and tie them together, buckle them good and tight, and put them in the river. A man would sit up on them and ferry them on down to where he was going.

U: How do you tie them together?

L: With chains. Buckle them real good. Just get some log chains and things and bind them together.

U: How do you steer that?

L: Well, it's kind of like a skiff. You guide a skiff with a paddle, and they had a way of guiding it kind of like a paddle. I knew one man who got drowned on one of them. Sometime, they'd get into a place, and they might want to sink. Anyway that thing went to bucking with him down in the water and dipping. I don't know whether he jumped off or what, but he got off somehow and he drowned.

They would raft them logs down to Alabama somewhere; I don't know where they would carry them. They didn't have trucks to haul logs like they do nowadays. They would cut a few and haul them out with the mules and whatnot. Now, my Lord, you can clean the woods out. They got a good way to cut them, good way to haul them, and a good way to get them. They got a way now of skidding them; you can set the skid over here on the dry land and pull the cable I don't know how far down through the woods. You hook that thing on a big log. Don't think the trees are going to hold it; that thing is going to pull and break down young trees and just make its own road to come on out. That's the way it do.

U: Do you know anyplace where they used to cut timber out there?

L: Out here? Well, they cut a lot of timber here on this place before we moved here. It was when I was a boy. I wouldn't know whether they would raft them or not; I wasn't living here at that time. At that time, it was plenty good timber in this bottom back here. They had a sawmill down here, and they sawed it and sold the lumber and so on. When I come to know the place, that's the way they were doing it there. Rafting the logs down wasn't so plentiful, but they would try to do it every once in awhile. It's dangerous for a man getting on that thing. It would sink sometimes.

U: Did people cut timber in Barton and Vinton like that? Did they cut a lot of timber up there?

L: Well, they were rafting some logs way up in there in that time. I think the man who drowned was a Woods. His sunk with him.

- U: We were talking about the place called Colbert Bottom. Do you know if people used to farm Colbert Bottom?
- L: Well, up along up in my day I can give you somebody who farmed it, but when I was a boy, as I said, old man Pat Hampton was living on that place. I'm quite sure he was farming some of it. Years ago, I knew a white man farmed that bottom, but that may not be far enough back for you.
- U: What was his name?
- L: Andy Ellis. Andy Ellis worked that farm; he worked that place. He had a lot of corn in there and pasture to graze the cattle on.
- U: Does that flood down in there much?
- L: Oh yeah, it floods too--just like here. That bottom goes all the way round up there where we used to live. That was just a bottom and it comes on down here. Yeah, it flooded. That's right.
- U: Do you remember any big floods when you lived up there?
- L: Yeah, I know one, a great big one. I'm thinking it was in 1906; it was a terrible flood in this settlement, practically lost all of the cattle and stock. The same water was over homes. Water was just everywhere. Yeah, that was a terrible water. I think it was in 1906, if I make no mistake.
- U: Did the water cover your dad's farm in that flood?
- L: Oh, yeah. My Lord, we had a beautiful crop at one time. In fact, there was one in 1916, which was still closer. 1906 was the time the water was terrible here and over there too. Drowned a lot of stock. This area down in here always would grow a lot of canes and things. There is a great big old place there on Tibbee Creek. When those things flood out, they are something. Now in 1916, there was another big flood; we had a nice prospect for a crop, but that water came and it just got all of the crops down here and all of the crops over there. That's right--1916.
- U: Could you describe the steamboat that you saw?
- L: Well, I don't know whether I can describe that thing. It wasn't too large; it was a medium boat. They would go from here on up to Aberdeen and on up. We could hear it hollering as it went. So one day we thought we would go down and see it, on it's way back. When we got down to the river, she was coming. All I can describe that thing. . . . I don't know how I can tell how that thing was built hardly. All I know is it had a pull or something behind it. It was pulling in the water, and it was hollering as it'd go. It was a pretty good little old boat. I guess it went up as far as Aberdeen and stopped and turned around.

U: Did the boat have any freight on it? Was it carrying things down the river?

L: No, I don't know what they had on that little old boat. I didn't see nothing on it. Several men were on it, but I don't know what it had on it. I didn't see anything on it. I just couldn't describe that boat or how it was made and what it looked like. It was the only one running, and I know one thing, it was. . . . I don't know how the thing was working or nothing. All I know is there was something on it pulling it through the water alright. It was steam or whatever it is.

U: Did it have a paddle on it or a big wheel?

L: Yeah, it did. Yeah, that thing had a big wheel on it. Sure did.

U: Was it in the back or on the side?

L: The way that thing was fixed was it had a big wheel pulling. Yet I couldn't tell exactly if that thing was in the back, or the engine or the motor or whatever was pulling that thing. I don't know where that thing was. I don't know whether it was in the front or what. That was a long time; I can't describe how it was made.

U: Do you remember how old you were when you saw it?

L: Well, I was in my boyhood, but I wasn't all that old. Still, we went down to see the little old thing. We got to see the boat. That's all I did; I saw it, and I can't tell much about it. That thing was running. It was going on about its business pretty good.

U: Did you ever hear of any boat landings out by Barton or Vinton where a boat like that could stop?

L: Boat landing? Well, no, I didn't. I didn't hear tell of any boat landings. Well, I don't know whether they had one or not. Of course, that thing was small. That thing couldn't carry very much of nothing, doesn't look like to me. It was just something out there demonstrating or something. I don't know.

U: Isn't the river pretty shallow for a boat like that? It's not very deep in places.

L: Well, in that day the river was deeper than it is now. You see, in time so much washes in, logs and things, and fills in the river. There's places people could walk across on in the summertime. That lets you know that it was filling in. If it had not been like that, it would have been deep all of the time. People could walk across the river in places. You could go on across on the other side come on back on this side. That's right.

U: We were talking before about the cotton gin in Vinton where people went to gin their cotton. Do you know how long that had been there?

- L: No, I imagine that gin was there before I was born; I was born in 1896. I was a little fellow just running around with my mother going around, and I can commemorate these things pretty good. I can't tell it all just like it should be, but I can give you some of it probably.
- U: Do you know what happened to that gin?
- L: Yeah, I know in time it went down; they quit using it. It was so desolated.
- U: Did someone take the steam engine away? Did they come and get it or did they just leave it there?
- L: Well, I know one thing, I never did see the engine; somebody must have moved it. Yeah, I knew where it used to sit over there, alright.
- U: But you never really saw the engine when you were a kid?
- L: Well, as I go along the road with my mother, going to the post office or something, it was sitting off to the right on the road; I imagine it wasn't such a great big gin. I just imagine that. They ginned cotton there alright, but they soon quit using it.
- U: Did the building stand there for a long time?
- L: No, I never did see. . . . I can't give much in account of that building, but I know some of the old boilers or whatnot sat around there quite a long time. I don't know what was the outcome. Somebody sold them for junk iron, I reckon.
- U: Do you know if there was a gristmill there?
- L: Now, that kind of gets me. I don't remember a gristmill. In that time, they must have not had one there because people would take a piece of tin and take a nail and put holes all in it. Tack it on the board and grit corn on it. You push it up and down like you are washing. It would be fine enough to cook. That cut it all to pieces. (laughter)
- U: So they did their own corn then; they didn't have to take it to a mill?
- L: Yeah, by that, there must not have been a mill around because I know my mother used to get on that thing and grit corn. It would cut it up fine, too. People in those days done a whole lot of things that people wouldn't hardly believe now. But yeah, they did it. If they wanted some meal, if they had done run out of meal, they'd take that thing out there and shuck some corn, and rub it. You had to be careful you didn't cut your hand. Just grind that corn up, and it would just be meal. That's right. I know my mother and father did it, and I imagine others did that as well.

U: Do you know if your father ever used that gin in Vinton when it was still there?

L: Well, I'm quite sure he did because he was buying some land from the man who owned that gin; that was old man Henry Watson. I'm quite sure he used it. Yeah, I'm quite sure he used it.

U: But it quit operating when you were a child?

L: Yeah, when I was a child. When I come to know anything, I could see some of the old boilers and those things sitting down over there, but the building was gone--tore down.

U: If I'm talking about kinds of cotton, is there blue cotton and white cotton? Have you ever heard that?

L: No, but I'm not going to say there's not any blue; I haven't seen any. All that I've seen was white.

U: Are there different kinds of cotton which are better than other kinds?

L: Oh, yeah.

U: How do you describe those?

L: Well, we got what we call short staple and got what you call long staple. We had a cotton in this country that they called Webber. It had long lint; it was like silk. It sold for a good price. We had another cotton we called Green Seed; it was short lint. Then we had another cotton we called half-and-half; well, it was short lint. Then we had another cotton we called Cooks Prolific. That was pretty good cotton. And so on, there were a lot of varieties of cotton.

U: But you never heard of anybody describing them by colors?

L: No, I sure didn't. All cotton that I have heard of and seen is white.

U: If your dad used that gin that was in Vinton, where would he take his cotton when he sold it?

L: Well, I was small, but it could have been he sold it to the man who owned the gin. I don't know. He didn't have any good way to take it to town, I don't know. But even if he did, it had to go to town in a wagon. That's the way we would take our cotton up to town--in a wagon.

U: When you plant cotton, how far apart do you put the furrows?

L: What the rows?

U: Yes.

L: Three feet.

U: Why do you need that much room? That's pretty far isn't it?

L: Well, three feet. Well, that is just the old regulation. They would plant cotton mostly in three-foot rows. But lately in growing cotton, they discovered a new way to make it. That was to put the rows a little closer together. You see, the old rule was we'd thin out with the hoe. In the new deal, you would plant it thick, and then you wouldn't cut it out to one stalk. You just cut through there, and kid of chunked it, or block it with so many stalks in a hill. Then they went to fertilizing it, and it paid off. Cotton will make thick if you plant it together, if it is rich. When that cotton grow up. . . . Well, say here are four stalks in this hill or five; it will come up and when they begin to fruit, they're not going to just all stand up together. Some stalks falls apart. They fall apart, and then every stalk will have its fruit on it.

U: What's the soil out in Barton and Vinton like for cotton? Is it good for cotton?

L: Barton?

U: Yeah, in Barton.

L: Sand, black loam sand. That's that dirt; it's supposed to be good dirt, black loam sand. It would make cotton and corn, too.

U: Do you make the rows different distances apart for corn or water-melons?

L: Oh, yeah. You put watermelons about eight or nine feet apart, because they are going to run. It takes plenty of room. So you just make a row for watermelon like you do for cotton. You got to have a bed row what you call row-wide; you got to just throw in so many furrows to the row, and then probably step nine or ten feet over and do it again. That's the way you plant your watermelons. Then when you get ready to plant them, there is two ways to plant them; I would always check my watermelons. I was a good old watermelon raiser; I knew how to raise them. Now, I would do that to plow them either way I wanted to. I'll check them; I would take my mules and my buster and I would run a furrow down that way. Go over here now, ten feet, and run another furrow, and run another one. Then when I get my long rows plowed out, I'm going to check it. I'm going to go crossways. In going across every time, you'd run across one of those joints there. You see what's open? That's a check. Well, then I would put so much fertilizer in each hill, and then throw up about four listers, as we called them, to the row. Then I would plant them. Then as they grow, I'd make them rich; I'd put that fertilizer in. I'd take my wagon and several loads of fertilizer and just drive out there, and drive up and down them rows

with a load of fertilizer, using my shovel. I'd put a great big shovelful of good fertilizer right in the hill. Then when I throw my dirt there, I go back there and work that hill up with my hoe to mix that fertilizer in with some dirt. Then when they come up, they don't be long going to the top.

U: How deep in the soil do you turn up when you do a furrow?

L: Well, we got two soils, isn't it? Top soil and then a bottom soil. In breaking land, you are supposed to break it just as deep as you possibly can. It is better to break it deep. That gives it a chance to absorb water; it goes down in there and holds it. That's the reason the farmer plows early; he wants to catch the moisture. The water in the earth is like oil in a lamp. When you light your wick, it draws the oil out of the lamp to the top of the lamp. That's the way the earth is. When you break your land nice and good, it gets some good waters on it. You more than apt can make some crop if it is dry; you just stir that dirt, and stir that dirt. Every time you plow it, a little moist rises. You just keep on plowing until you get through.

U: I'd like to ask some questions about medicine. Did people buy store medicine or did they make home remedies when they were sick?

L: In this day or back there?

U: When you were a child.

L: Oh, they used home remedies a whole lot. When I was small, I had malaria fever, twice--heavy. It was a weed that grew they called the jimsonweed; it grows around the lots where it is rich. The old folks would go out there and pull them leaves and put them in a rag and tie them to your head. They did me like that, and they had to put them leaves to my head every few moments. The fever was so high and hot. They tied a rag around my head. Shucks, it wouldn't be very long before you could take them things and pound them up like tobacco going into a pipe or a cigarette. Yeah, I was hot.

I got snakebit when I was a boy; I was picking peas. A snake bit me right on my right ankle, right on the bone. It was a rattlesnake pilot. My father was in town already that day, so my uncle. . . . There were two brothers. Two of my mother's brothers were twins, Willy Lee Lucas and Willard Lee Lucas. They were both there. They got excited, and they tied my leg up. They like to cut my leg off, tying it so tight. We went on over there, and we met Papa right in the corporation of town, coming home on his mule, so he went back. That doctor gave something. I don't know what. Somebody said it was hartshorn.

U: You said you had malaria. Did people get malaria often?

L: Oh, yeah, in that time, plenty. I want to get through with that snakebite. He give me something to drink, and then he gave Papa a

bottle of liniment and told him to rub my leg with it. My leg was hurting me so bad I was just crying like a baby right there in town. Folks didn't know what was ailing me; they was all crowding around looking, "What's ailing him? What's ailing him?"

Well, we came on home. Children have what they call play-mamas or something, I don't know, some kind of Mama. An old lady named Susan Grissom was my play-mama. She called me her boy. My name is Andrew Lenoir, but for a nickname they called me Son. The next day, my leg had swollen so bad and my thigh; my toes were just like that, hurting. My old mother or whatever you call her heard that I was snakebit, and here she come rocking in. I heard her before she got in the house, "They tell me Son is snakebit." They said, "Yeah, he is." She walked on in the house and walked to the bed and looked at that leg. It done got up here, and my thigh was great big. She said, "Die dead! This boy gonna die if you don't do something for him. The doctor ain't done nothing."

This is home remedy, and I haven't forgot it. She told my mother, "Get me a egg." My mother went and got her an egg, and she broke the egg, threw the white away, and kept the yolk. She told my mother, "Bring me some salt." She did. She said, "Bring me some turpentine." She did. Said, "Bring me a little lamp oil." She brought that alright, and she put that all together and stirred that egg up in it and made a nice salve. Said, "Give me a clean rag." She give her a clean rag. She dressed that cloth and put it right over where that snakebite. She said, "I want this did three times a day--morning, noon, and night." That was around about noon when she was over there and fixed me up. That evening they fixed up another one. When they pulled that rag off my leg. . . . Do you know how blood looks on the rag?

U: Yes.

L: That's the way it was looking--green, and it had a spot on it. It could have been about as big as a half of a dollar, I reckon, or something like that. They threw that away, and they redressed it. That stayed on until that night. Pulled it off again and that was green. Put a new one on for morning. The next morning they pulled it off, and it was green, but every time it was getting a little lesser and lesser. She used that until you couldn't see any green on the rag or whatever. She said, "Well, that's all of the poison out now." That woman cured me just that way. Cured me. I could see the skin a mainly swizzaling and wrinkling up; it was pulling it down. That's all that was did to that snakebite, and I'm here tonight. Home remedy.

U: A good one.

L: A good one, too; I mean a good one.

U: Do you know what doctor it was in town?

- L: Yeah, I know him. His name was Dr. Dean; that's the man that waited on me.
- U: In West Point?
- L: West Point. This old lady was there in the country--farmer.
- U: What's a play-mama?
- L: Well, you know, children. . . . People do something like that, kind of like a little godmother or something. I don't know. Children call their play-mama Mother, and all like that. I don't know what it means, but it meant a whole lot to me at that time, I know--that woman over there and seeing about me. She really cured me.
- U: Her name was Mrs. Grishum? What was her name again?
- L: Susan Grissom.
- U: Where did she live?
- L: Oh, she didn't live so far from us; she stayed. . . . Well, can you remember where London Chapel Church is?
- U: Yes.
- L: Well, of course that land runs near down to London Chapel, and the man stayed right down the road there. That's where that old lady stayed at, at that time, on that place. The man who owns it now wasn't there. The man who was in possession of it then was named Squire Shirley. That was home remedy, and I didn't take no kind of medicine or nothing. It just pulled all of that poison out of my leg; it went on down.
- U: We were talking about malaria. Is there a certain time of the year when that's worse?
- L: Yeah, mostly summertime, malaria generally breaks out and gets heavy in the summertime.
- U: Did people buy things like quinine?
- L: Yeah, they used quinine. Sure did. But they used home remedies as well. I was very sick twice with it--heavy. My real mother was dead; she died when I was about fourteen years old. My father married again, and she was a doctor's widow. She could do right smart to help you. I remember that I had that fever bad and she went out there and got these old bitter weeds, these old yellow tops--we called them dog fennels. She pulled them things up by the roots and just brought some of them on in the house. She put a tub down on the floor and boiled some hot water. Then she'd sit two chairs there; the tub was right between the two chairs. She took me and put me near that tub and sat me there. She put a quilt over the chairs and tub to hold the steam in. I did what she wanted me to,

and they poured that hot water in there on them dog fennels and whatnot. That stuff did something, I don't know, but it sweated me. It sweated a lot of fever out of me; it sweated me. She just did that and sweated a lot of it out of me--pulled it out. The old folks used to do a whole lot of home doctoring; that's right.

U: What was your stepmother's name?

L: My stepmother was named Harriet Lenoir; she was named Harriet.

U: Harriet.

L: That was her name Harriet Lenoir.

U: You said she was a doctor's widow.

L: Yes, she was a doctor's widow.

U: Did she live out in there? Did her husband, the doctor, live out there, too?

L: Well, they lived in West Point when they were married, but he died, and my father chanced to marry her. She was a good woman, too and nice. For a stepmother, I couldn't tell the difference in treatment. There was five children of us. We couldn't tell; we just knew she wasn't our mother. That's all.

U: Do you remember what her first husband's name was?

L: Dr. Knighton.

U: Can you spell that?

L: Knighton, K-N-I-G-H-T-O-N, I reckon it is.

U: I wanted to ask you some more questions about the general store in Vinton. Where does that sit? Is it on a low place or a high place there across from the cemetery?

L: What the cemetery?

U: Yeah, if the cemetery is on the left and the store is on the right is it on a real high place?

L: Well, going north the cemetery is to the left; it's elevated from the road on a nice little hill.

U: Is it close to the road?

L: Well, you can see over there. You can see the cemetery from the road. It's not too far from the road.

U: Is that where the general store is on the other side?

- L: Yeah, that was the general store right on the other side. That was the general store.
- U: Is the general store on a hill, too?
- L: No, it wasn't over on the hill where the cemetery was. It was right over here on the . . . see, the road was running kind of north and south. Well, here's the store right over here to the right. I wouldn't say that it was on a hill. It was just on the level.
- U: Which direction did the store face? Did it sit longways with the road or did it sit crossways?
- L: What the store? See the road went right by the store. It wasn't far from the road. You could just pull out of the road in that day. They were just wagon roads. Didn't have wide roads like you got now. It was just sitting east and west on the road there. The door was facing in the west, and the back end of it was in the east. It was long, kind of built in a shotgun style, something like that.
- U: Did it stand up off of the ground?
- L: Yeah, it was up off of the ground; it was on blocks. Yeah, it was on blocks; that's right.
- U: Did it have a brick chimney in it or a flue?
- L: Yeah, a flue. It wasn't just a chimney; it had a flue in it.
- U: Was the post office in the front of it or the back of it?
- L: Well, it was the same thing. That big store was answering as the post office. It wasn't but one store, and that's where they would stack the mail there. People would come and get it.
- U: If I walked in the front door, what would I see?
- L: Well, if you walked in the front door of that store, you would see probably a counter and shelves with probably products, food or whatever, stacked up there on the shelves.
- U: Would the post office part be in the front or in the back when I walked in the building?
- L: Well, it was mostly kind of to the back. Of course, I imagine it could be right up to the front; I don't know. It anybody come to get the mail, it is kind of back.
- U: Do you remember a house that was close to that general store? Was there any house north of there?
- L: There wasn't a house north, but there was two houses near. I told you about the boy what had a nurse. They stayed in the big house.

There was another small house; it wasn't no double house. It was a single house built with a drop shed on the back.

U: Where was that one-room house?

L: Well, it was sitting kind of south of that store.

U: South of it?

L: Yes, on this side of it; it wasn't beyond on the other side or either back that-a-way. It's kind of south of the store.

U: Do you know who lived there?

L: Well, I know who lived in it up in the years, but back there I didn't know who lived in it. I think I gave you the people who owned those houses as you pass along going through Vinton. I think I was pretty well right on those. I can tell you one man and a wife that stayed in there awhile; his name was Flim Keaton.

U: Which direction did that house face?

L: North.

U: So it faced the store?

L: That's right; it faced the store. The door was north, and it had a drop shed on it on the south end of it. It wasn't such a big house; it was kind of small.

U: Did it have a chimney?

L: Yeah.

U: Do you remember which end it was on?

L: Yes, that chimney was sitting on the east end of that house.

U: Did it stand up off of the ground?

L: It wasn't high off the ground; it was very low. It was almost on the ground; it had some little blocks under it, but it was just built low to the ground. It wasn't up where nothing much could get under it.

U: When you say little blocks, do you mean stones or wood?

L: Well, wood. They were using wood in that day.

U: Were there any trees or flowers or crepe myrtle around that house? Do you remember?

L: No, sure wasn't.

U: Do you remember what happened to that house?

L: Well, in time, they tore that little old house down. Yeah, just tore it down and took it out of the way.

U: What happened to the store after it closed?

L: That old house sat there for a long time. Eventually, they tore the old store down. Yeah, it sat there for a long time.

U: Did anyone ever live in it?

L: Well, yes. After they quit using it for a store, people lived in it. I know one white man lived in it named Perkins. He and his wife lived in it.

U: If I was going up the Vinton Road toward Aberdeen, the place where the cotton gin was would be on my right. Then there would be Flim Keaton's house.

L: Right.

U: Then there would be a little road that goes back to Mr. Watson's house, and then there would be the general store?

L: Yeah, right.

U: And on the left would be the cemetery?

L: Right.

U: Was the general store across from the cemetery or a little bit north of it?

L: Well, if you walk out of that store and go straight over there, you'd walk right on over to the cemetery. Yes, you would walk right on over there to the cemetery.

U: How far was it between Flim Keaton's house and the store?

L: Well, I don't know. It's a house sitting right out there next to mine. It could have been about that distance from my house here.

U: How far would it have been from Flim Keaton's house to where the gin was?

L: Nowhere, that house was sitting over on the old gin place. The old house was sitting right where the gin used to be.

U: So Flim Keaton's is south of the little road that goes through to Watson's house?

L: Right, south of it. Got that right.

U: There wasn't ever a house though on the other side of the general store?

L: No, the other houses were on the roadside, as you're coming on to the store.¹ To the right, it was a house built along there. The man who lived there was a preacher, Sy Howard. Then down farther was Bill Moore; in fact, his name was William Moore. Down farther was William Moore's brother, Jim Moore. They were all on that same line to the right going north. Over on the left, it was another double house with a open hall. I think I gave you that old house before, didn't I?

U: Another Keaton?

L: No, he wasn't a Keaton.

U: Jeff Daugherty?

L: No, I don't know who I give you in that house, or I could have not given you that house.

U: The only other house that we talked about on the left side was Diddy Keaton's.

L: This house is a pretty good little piece from the road. It's sitting off to the west side there. It's a pretty good little piece from the road.

U: On the left side?

L: Yeah, on the left going. I know some people lived in there, but I'm trying to go back far as I can go back in that house. I know good and well, but I can't remember. Of course, I knew one man that stayed there named Paul Broyle. He had a wife and two children, a boy and a girl. I don't know anybody else.

U: If I was standing at Flim Keaton's house and I went down the little road that goes to Watson's house like I was going to the river, Watson's house would be on my left, and there's a big tree there.

L: Right.

U: Was there ever a house that was down a little road south of there?

L: No, wasn't no more houses back that-a-way. All of the houses was back on the road.

U: Do you ever remember a man named Zack Ellis?

L: Oh, yeah. I remember Zack Ellis.

¹See addendum to interviews for additional information.

U: Did he have a store?

L: Yes, he had a store at one time. Zack Ellis had a pretty good little store there once.

U: Could you tell me where that was?

L: Where the store was? Have you ever been down that road? You have been down there, ain't you? Well, you saw where the big, long chicken house was built.

U: Yes.

L: Well, that was the horse barn, not a chicken house; it was just a big old barn. There's nothing along there for me to tell exactly where that store was. That store was about halfway from that road down to his house. It sit about halfway in there. There was a big old shade tree there at the time, but a tornado pulled it up. So that's the way that works. His store was sitting right on the side of the road.

U: What did it look like?

L: Well, they build an old store kind of long. He had a pretty good-sized little old store; it was long. He kept a few things in it, not too much.

U: Can you tell me what kind of things he kept in it?

L: Yes, he kept meal, flour, and kept molasses, syrup as we call them, and many other little things.

U: Do you know a family named Schrock?

L: Schrocks, yeah. They's way up near about to the other road where you go down to Concob and to the Gladneys. Yes, I knew Schrocks.

U: Did they have a store?

L: Yes, Schrocks had a store. Schrocks had a pretty good, big store; it was pretty good. Yeah, he had a store.

U: What happened to that family? Did they leave?

L: Yeah, they left. Then another man got in possession of that place named Anderson. I think Schrocks were German. Schrocks had, I think, three houses. I think there's three. It could have been four; I don't know. I'm not for sure, but I know they had three because they had two that weren't far from the store, and they had one way out to the gate where we go through.

U: Was it a big family that they needed so many rooms?

L: Yeah, Schrocks were kind of a big family.

U: Did tornados come through there very often?

L: Well, not so often. Well, it pulled down three big trees there at the Ellis store. There was a big tree right where the store was middleways down there, and up there at the corner where you turn to come down to that house, there was a great large oak on each corner of the road; it pulled those two down.

U: Did you ever hear a story about a tornado taking a house down out there?

L: Out there to the Schrocks or somewhere?

U: Out by Vinton some place?

L: Out by Vinton? Well, yes, the storm. . . . I think that was in 1906 or 1909, one of the two. I ain't got it so perfect, but it was along in there. A man was living up the road on the left side. I gave you one of the Keatons; I gave you Flim Keaton. This man was his father. He lived way up the road there on the left. The storm interfered him there pretty bad.

U: What was his name?

L: Larry Keaton.

U: His house was on the left? So it's on the same side as the cemetery?

L: Yeah, as you are going on up.

U: Was it between the cemetery and the school?

L: Yeah, it was.

U: What did that house look like?

L: Well, the storm tore it down, but it was a big-size plank house. I don't think it was open hall; I think it was two rooms or more, but it was built close together with a closed-in hall. Of course, Larry Keaton got a little hurt; the storm hurt him a little.

On that same place there . . . but they weren't close to the road. They were over across the creek. You don't want none like that, do you?

Not across the creek. Was Larry Keaton's house that fell down in the storm closer to the cemetery or closer to that school?

L: I believe it come about near being about half the distance.

U: Was it on a hill or flat place?

L: Yeah, it was kind of a hill.

U: Did anybody ever build a house in the same place again?

L: No, never did build another house in the same place. Sure didn't.

U: When you lived out there as a child and people needed a blacksmith, what did they do? Where did they go?

L: Well, it was some blacksmiths. It was a blacksmith we called him Steve Daniel, a colored fellow; he was a good iron worker. Then we had another one; he was a white man. If I make no mistake, I believe I gave you Barkemeyer's name. Didn't I give you Barkemeyer?

U: No.

L: Well, Barkemeyer was a iron worker.

U: Where did those two men live?

L: Well, Larry Keaton was living up there, and the storm interfered him. You passed right by the place as you turn to go by the white folk's church. It's a place down there to the right. I know you remember seeing it down there. Well, Steve lived there, and he had a shop there on that place. Barkemeyer lived over here on the main road going down toward Strong Hill's Church. He had a shop over there on that place we call Sy Thompson's. Do you remember that name?

U: I think I've heard that name.

L: Sy Thompson is dead now, but yet his name is living on the place there.

U: To go to Steve Daniel's place, I go up the Vinton/Aberdeen Road like I am going to Aberdeen. There's the church and school place on my left, and there's the road that would go left past there. And he lives down that road?

L: Now, which one was that?

U: Steve Daniel.

L: Yeah, that's where Daniel was living, but Daniel is dead now. He's not living, but at that time, he was living on that place.

U: How far down that road was that?

L: Well, as you go on down, you would see the old Schrock's place. I know you passed the old Schrock's place. Well, as you'd go on down, you'd hit the Gladney's place. Over on this side, you'd hit that place where I'm telling you about. It's on the north side, before you get to the creek.

U: Close to the Gladneys, but on the other side?

- L: Yeah. Some of that land run down near to Gladney's.
- U: That's where Steve Daniel lived?
- L: Well, he used to, yeah. He lived there.
- U: Were you ever in his shop?
- L: Yeah.
- U: What was that like?
- L: Well, I tell you, Steve he was a good workman; he could shoe horses, sharpen plow points, put points on--lay points--fix up old wagons, and all that kind of stuff.
- U: That road that he lives on goes west past the school there.
- L: Yeah.
- U: Did that road ever go east toward the river?
- L: Past the school? No, that road. . . . It was a camp sitting over there to the right on the Watson's place back over there. They would go to the river that way, going to the camp.
- U: North of their camphouse, was there ever another road that went east?
- L: No, I don't remember any.
- U: Did you ever know a man named George Gresham?
- L: George Gresham, no. You're getting that name right there?
- U: Well, it's spelled G-R-E-S-H-A-M. Have you ever heard of a place called March Hill?
- L: Yeah.
- U: What's that?
- L: Just a high hill back down over here on Town Creek. Did you get in touch with Ruben Moore?
- U: No.
- L: Ruben Moore owns that old March Hill. Of course, Tombigbee done bought it now; they got it in possession.
- U: Did anyone ever live there?
- L: Well, not to my knowing. I heard people saying somebody used to live down there, but I can't remember it.

U: Do you know why it is called March Hill?

L: Well, I think the reason it is called March Hill is after old man March Montgomery. I think he lived on that hill sometime back. I think the hill is named after him.

U: Did you ever know a man whose last name was Whatley?

L: Well, now where did he live?

U: There might have been someone that worked in that general store whose name was Whatley. He might have lived down where the Gladneys lived.

L: Oh, wait a minute. You mean Whatley. Oh yeah, I knew Whatley. I sure did. Yes sir, I knew Whatley. I knew Whatley, good fashion.

U: Could you tell me about him?

L: Well, he was the man that owned that place what the Gladneys live on, at that time. He owned that place, at that time. I don't know much about Whatley really; he came from the Delta. He's the one we are talking about now. It was two brothers; it was two brothers of them.

U: Did either one of them ever work in that store?

L: No, not that I know of. I never did learn that they did.

U: Did you ever know a man named Van Howard?

L: Oh, yeah, Van Howard? I knew him. He stayed up in there, but he went to town and lived for awhile. People are like that. I don't know too much about him; I can't tell too much about him. I knew him alright, but I never did know too much about him.

U: Do you know if he ever worked in that general store?

L: Well, not as I know of. I don't think so. I don't think he did.

U: I still have some other things we want to talk about, but it's getting late. Maybe we can do it again some other time? There are still a lot of things to talk about. (laughter)

L: Got a whole lot of things to talk about yet? (laughter)

U: I'd like to thank you very much again for what we have done this evening.

PA: This is an on-site interview with Mr. Andrew Lenoir for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by Peggy Anderson and James McClurken on June 26, 1980. Mr. Lenoir's address is Route 2, Box 240, West Point, Mississippi 39773. His telephone number is 494-7219.

There was a little road that came into the general store at Vinton?

AL: Yes. Fact is it wasn't far from the road. At that time, this Vinton/Aberdeen Road wasn't as wide as it is now. That store sit right out there facing the road. (move to Structure V-1)

DA: There is a little bit of a high area right in through there.

AL: Yeah.

DA: Back under in there, there is a pile of bricks.

AL: Well, you done hit it then; that mound there is bricks. Yeah, that's the old store; that's where the old store sat, right out there.

PA: Did it have a brick chimney?

AL: Oh, yeah, it had brick flues and things.

PA: A brick flue and a stove?

AL: Yeah, it didn't have a chimney; it had flues.

PA: Would this have been in the center of the store or on an end?

AL: Well, that was kind of centered in that store. The store was built oblong; it wasn't square. It was an oblong building. I know we used to come in here; it wasn't far from the road, and if you found bricks here, this got to be the place, got to be. Yeah.

DA: See the big stone over there?

AL: Oh, yeah!

DA: There's one there and there's one. . . .

AL: Now, you know what that stone was? That was a pillar. You know, in that time they built those old houses with log pillars and things on them, and that's a pillar that the sill was resting on. It was put up with that. It had that under the foundation. That's right. Let me see, did you find another pillar?

PA: Have you seen any more pillars?

DA: Yeah, there are more stones. There's one there with the moss on it.

PA: Right here.

AL: Oh yeah, this is where the house was. Yeah, here's the stone. See, there wasn't these trees. There wasn't no trees here at all at that time. It was clear, and you could see back yonder to the old boss man's house. It sat back out there, too. Then the old gin sat down farther; I suspect it would be hard to find because they farmed that land after they moved the gin. I'm quite sure there isn't much evidence of where the gin was because all of that junk was moved out of the way, and the land was farmed.

DA: Was the front door of the store out here then facing the road?

AL: Right, the door was facing the road.

DA: There are two more. . . .

AL: Looks like I see a brick yonder, too; there's a brick over there.

DA: There are two more stones back this way, and they're a little harder to find because it is kind of overgrown back there. But there are two more.

AL: Yeah, that's it. Now, this mound here, as you say, could be brick.

DA: Yeah, there's definitely some brick in there.

AL: Yeah, that was the old flue; I imagine it fell down.

DA: Can you remember any other structures that would have been just to the north and east of the store?

AL: No, I didn't know any other.

DA: Okay. How about up along here, straight to the north? There's a big old oak tree up there, and there is an old pear tree and a pretty old bodock in a kind of a flat area. It looks like there probably was a house there. Do you remember anything like that?

AL: Well, is that on the left side of this road or the right?

PA: Right side.

DA: On the side that we're on.

AL: On this side?

DA: Yes.

AL: Well, how far up is that?

DA: Not too far. We can walk up there; it's not too far away.

PA: Do you want to just walk up there?

LA: Let's walk up there. I'm studing now. I don't remember. When we came to Vinton, this was the old post office place. When I was a boy, I used to come here with my mother. This is where we got our mail from. Mailboxes wasn't in style at that time, and we had a colored man who would go to town about twice a week and bring that mail out here. Then the people would come here, and the storeman would separate it and give it to them. That's the way they got the mail.

JM: Mr. Lenoir, did Mr. Watson ever have a barn by his house?

AL: A barn? Well, he had a small barn. Back here where his old house seat was sitting was on a hill. Then right over on the lower part of it, he had a barn, but it wasn't such a large barn. In fact, he had a barn down on the other Cox place and labor. He had farmers down there. He kept a lot of cattle; he was a cattle raiser and hog raiser. He raised a lot of watermelons. He raised a lot of sunflowers; he planted those things by the acres and hired people to gather them. That's the kind of farming he did. He didn't fool with cotton very much. (move approximately 250' north of Structure V-1)

DA: There's the big oak tree here. Right back behind us, there is an old osage orange, an old bodock.

AL: Yeah.

DA: Down at the far end, there is an old pear tree down there, too. You can't really see it too well from here. This area right out in here looked like a spot where a house might have stood.

AL: Let's go here and look at this pear tree. (moving north)

PA: Who was it that lived in the house on the other side?

AL: Well, a man by the name of Larry Keaton. A storm came and pulled the house down on him; it didn't kill him, but it hurt him.

PA: What was that house like? Was it a small house?

AL: Well, that was a pretty good-sized house. It was a plank house.

PA: Did it have chimneys?

AL: Yeah, it had chimneys.

DA: That one right up there is the old pear tree. (standing approximately 350' north of Structure V-1)

AL: Yeah. I don't know whether this guarantees anyone lived here because old Mr. Watson would set out orchards everywhere. Down where we came from near his house, he had an orchard down there way off from the house. A peach orchard with figs and whatnot. So, I couldn't guarantee it was a house out there.

He did all that kind of work. I know he had some good old peach trees down there; he had a lot of fig trees. He would just grow stuff like that. He just had people watering them things, just toting water with tubs. They would be pouring tubs of water around them. They didn't have a hose to run it; they'd tote it and pour it around those fig trees and fruit trees. That's the way it operated down home.

I don't remember a house out here. It could have been one. You haven't found anyplace that resembles a house seat, except through the pear tree. There wasn't no woods nowhere. That man just used all of this land. He'd just plant orchards and everything.

An old pear tree will live a long time. Down there where we passed Peter Montgomery's, on the other side of the road out there on the hill is another pear tree; it's the same way. I'm sure nobody lived out there, and that pear tree stayed there and bore pears every year. It's a good pear tree, and I suspect that old pear tree is around out there now. Ain't no telling. Nobody lived out there on that hill, but he had pear trees out there. He just did all that kind of work. I don't believe nobody lived this far back on this side. I remember one house was on that side over there, and the storm came and pulled it down. I can't give an account of but one house that was over there across from Peter's, and that was an old big plank double house. That's where I'm talking about that pear tree being on the other side of it over there.

PA: Who lived in that house?

AL: Well, so many people lived in that old house. A man by the name. . . . I think I forgot that man's name. Anyway, I know William Moore stayed in that house, and another man by the name Pierce Mealer. Then a whole lot of folks lived in that house just one after another.

DA: Mr. Lenoir, do you ever remember this area being plowed? You can sort of see that on the surface there are some widely spaced plow furrows.

AL: Yes. There are some of them rows. As I say, that man just worked everywhere; he raised watermelons all over this country and put out orchards.

DA: Do you have any idea what would be growing up here in wide furrows like that?

AL: Wide furrows mean watermelons.

PA: Is that wide enough apart for watermelons?

AL: Yeah, that's right. He had those big wide furrows. He raised watermelons. He raised them. That whole Cox place down where I was showing you as we were coming along is five hundred and forty acres. That man used to plant near about all that stuff in watermelons. He was the only watermelon raiser. Folks would just come from as far as you could hear tell of with their wagons to get watermelons. (return to Structure V-1)

(examining artifacts) I have no idea what that is because it is broke. Now I just wonder who washed their teeth with this brush. (laughter) My Lord!

DA: I think it is rubber.

AL: Rubber?

DA: Yeah, it's molded; there's a mold seam along the edge of it there. See that seam?

AL: Yes.

DA: And it's a little bit flexible; you can bend it a little bit. I think it looks like molded rubber.

AL: Yeah.

DA: In this general area where the store is, you don't recall any other buildings either slightly north or south of the store?

AL: No.

DA: Anything else out in here?

AL: No, but going south where we passed those two houses down there on the road, a little up above where Peter lives, there used to be a couple of houses on that line.

DA: Nothing nearby the store?

AL: Nothing nearby the store, nothing but just the old Watson house seat. They had a little old barn down the hill there and a lot of goats and things down in there.

DA: First of all, let me ask you about this road right here that goes to the Watson house. Is that an old road?

AL: Oh yeah, that road been there ever since I knew myself.

DA: That was when the cotton gin was there?

AL: Oh, yeah.

DA: Okay. Do you remember anything that was just to the north side of that road out in this area? We dug this hole right up here and found quite a bit of old dishes and things in that, and it looked like there might have been something around this area. Do you recall anything in here?

AL: Now, we're on the south side of the old store house, aren't we?

PA: Yes. Do you want to go out to the road and get a look where we are?

AL: Yes, let's go out to this road.

PA: Do you remember anything up north of this little road?

AL: This may be a new road they cut. You see, that's the old road.

PA: That's the old road, just south of this one we're on right here?

AL: That's the old road, yeah.

PA: Do you remember anything just north of the road here?

AL: No, I don't. I don't know anything on this side of that road. As I say, you could just see everywhere because there wasn't any trees or anything. That man farmed all of this land on both sides, and all I can remember is one house up farther here on the west side. As I said, the storm in 1910, I believe, blew it down. That's the only thing I can recall here. I can remember the old Watson home house. It's placed down there, too. Did y'all find that? It's been there since I knew the place.

DA: Yes.

AL: I think there is an old white oak there if I make no mistake, a big white oak.

DA: There is.

AL: Well, then the gin sat right south of it, right on the ridge out there.

PA: Do you want to go to where the gin used to be?

AL: I don't know whether we can find any evidence of where that gin was sitting at that time because that land has been farmed and cleared off and everything. It wasn't nothing there. The man used to plant peas and everything all over this place.

PA: Want to go down there and give it a look?

AL: Yeah! We don't mind going looking.

DA: Was the gin right out in here, south of the intersection of the Vinton/Aberdeen Road and the road to the Watson house?

AL: No, that gin was back down by that old house seat, south of the old home seat. There could have been a house and someone lived there.

PA: Do you want to go down and take a look at the gristmill stone?

AL: It could be the house that I'm trying to locate that the storm blew down. I just can't hardly recall this place because it done grew up.

PA: So, Larry Keaton's house is on the east side of the Vinton Road, on the same side that the general store is on?

AL: No. If you are going up the Vinton Road, it's on the left.

PA: That's the Vinton Road right out there.

AL: Let's see. That's the Vinton Road right yonder, isn't it?

PA: Yes. Now, this little road right here hasn't been here for a long time?

AL: No, this road has been here for a good many years, but not a long time. I think that road was put in here for campers. You see, it says, "Keep Out." At one time, I think a man named Clark had that camp back here. It says, "No Trespassing, Keep Out, Posted." I think Watson sold that off or something back there. That was sold off.

PA: How did you get to the old Watson homeplace if this road wasn't here?

AL: Well, this road here would take you to Watson's old homeplace. This is the cemetery right here. Well, his house ought to be right down over there, right over on the left side of this road as we are going this way. (move to Structure V-2)

PA: Is this tree familiar?

AL: Yeah, that old big oak, right. Well, let's see, can we find the old house seat here?

DA: You can't really get back into it too easy, but I can show you about where it is.

AL: You can show us about where it is. Yeah, that oak tree, I remember that oak tree.

PA: Where do you remember the house being from the tree?

AL: Well, near as I can command, it look like to me that tree was

sitting at the south corner of that house. Look like that house was sitting on over there, near as I can view it. But anyway, you show me about where that house is now.

DA: Follow that little path through the trees, and it would be right back in there.

AL: Yeah, right in there.

DA: At least part of it is in there.

AL: Well, it come off down here just like I told. The house was on kind of high land, and right off down in here is where he had a little barn built, right down in here.

PA: Was this pond back here?

AL: I can't remember that. I can't recall that; I don't know if anybody put that pond there. Someone must have put that pond there. Here's a road here. They could have fixed that for a little fish place.

PA: So, this is the house that you remember as Henry Watson's?

AL: Yeah, that's it. What is all of that right yonder? Is that brick?

DA: No, there's an old pile that looks like asphalt shingles laying there or tar paper maybe or something like that.

AL: That old house was sitting north and south. The woman who stayed in it nursed Henry Watson's boy. He was kind of ill-formed. She used to store her hay. . . . You could come back here and go up under that house, and you could just store hay up under that house.

DA: Store hay under that house?

AL: Yeah.

DA: We can try to walk in there.

AL: Yeah.

PA: It was very high off of the ground, then?

AL: The back end was, yeah. It was way up. You see, it come off down in this hole here. It had to go way up to put hay under there. She used to buy hay and kept a cow and a hog or something for her and the boy occasionally. She'd buy hay and put it up under the house. It was dangerous, but that's the way she would do it.

DA: Down there, there's a corner right there. You can see the beam across the top on the brick pier.

AL: Well, as I was telling you, that house was back down under the hill. You see some of that stuff down there. You could store hay up under this thing. This is the old house seat. Yeah, that is a beam across there.

PA: This house was standing when you were a child?

AL: Oh, yeah, since I was a child.

PA: That looks like pretty new brick.

AL: Yeah, but them bricks were there when I was a kid. I don't know how long; they're just good bricks. I can remember way back when I was a kid, this old house stood here. After that Henry Watson died, a colored woman took the boy and nursed him here. He give her this for a home as long as she lived, and she stayed here until she died. The boy died before she did, and after he died, she just stayed here for a home until she died right here.

These beams or the sills, as we call them, are hewed out; it wasn't sawed.

DA: You mean hewed with a broadaxe?

AL: A broadaxe, right. Men in that day could fix it to look smooth like it was sawed almost. See, that's chipped though. Also right here, I can see where the ax went into it.

DA: That had to come out of a pretty big tree.

AL: Oh yeah, it was the heart of a tree.

DA: Did they cut the lumber for this right here on the site, somewhere out in Vinton?

AL: Well, I don't know; I know the foundation is hewed. You can see that, but I don't know where they got the lumber from. This house was built probably before I was born. I just grew up and come to know this old house. This big old house sat out here for a long time. The gin got to be in front of the house.

PA: Do you want to go back out to where the big tree is and look around again?

AL: I know good and well it got to be back there. It got to be out that way, to go back toward the road. The road is out there. That gin was sitting over in there, a little ways down there. As I say, that's the house seat. That's the old oak tree right there. You ain't been there to try to find that old gin seat, have you?

PA: Do you think that it is down closer to the road?

AL: Well, yeah. It got to be kind of south off from that house. It's off from the house.

DA: It's not that close to the Vinton Road then?

PA: The Vinton Road is out there past the van.

AL: Well, the Vinton Road ought to have it on there, too. We ought to be able to go on the Vinton Road because that's the main road and they haven't changed the road. Just other things have changed.

PA: Have you ever heard about a blacksmith shop out here?

AL: No, I haven't. I don't really know where this road ends up. Do you know where this road ends up at?

DA: Yeah, it ends at the river; there's a camphouse that a Watson owns down there.

AL: Well, that's what I told you. This here is a camp road because of the gate. Watson run that camp a good while himself and eventually he sold that camp off to a man named Clark. Clark died, and now Uncle Sam got it. (laughter) I don't care who had it; Uncle Sam is getting in this thing now, and done got in it--the boss man. Yeah, this is the camp road. I told you about that gate.

PA: When you came to Henry Watson's house, did you come in like this?

AL: No, we come in around up here from the main road; we had a road coming up in here somewhere from out there on the main road. We'd come over here from the main road; we had a road over here.

PA: But it wasn't this one that goes straight out to the main road?

AL: No, it wasn't this one; this is this new road. I know this is a new road. I don't know nothing about this road, but I knew it good and well must have went to the camp at the river down there. That's the old camp place.

DA: There is this road on a high spot back in here maybe a couple hundred yards south or so.

AL: Well, as I say, that old gin place sat out there on that hill. That's all I can remember. A little old single house stayed out there for awhile.

PA: Did the man build his house on the same place that the gin had been?

AL: Yeah, right along in the same place where it was over there. I remember the road when you couldn't see a bush on it, let alone trees, unless it was something like that big tree back there, shade trees. My Lord! (move to old road near Structure V-3)

PA: This is the same road?

AL: Yeah, this is the road. Right, this sure is the road.

DA: There's the old millstone.

AL: Looks like they ground cornmeal with that, didn't they? Looks like a rock that grind corn back in the old times. Well, we ought to be not far from that old gin seat, either.

DA: Okay.

AL: Now, that looks like the old road was out. . . . I'm thinking this is it, because we're on the hill where something was because of that rock there. At that time, I imagine the gin didn't make meal. You didn't have the kind of rocks to make meal like you make it now. They had another crusher as big as that one. Probably when you got through eating, you had about as much rock in you as you did bread. (laughter)

Yeah, this got to be the old road going into that old house because it is down here. You turn off the old road out there and go on up to the old house, but I just can't. . . . Is that new road out there?

PA: That's the Vinton Road.

AL: That's the Vinton Road; that's the main road. Well, this was just a detour waying off, going to the house over there.

PA: Where was the gin then? Was it on this side or that side?

AL: Oh, it was out here on this east side; the gin was on this side of the road. But the only evidence that I can get. . . . Something must have been out there because that rock ain't got no business out there unless it was in service one day or another. It was doing something. They put it out there for something. I'm quite sure that what we called the gin was out here, right off from that road. You turn off and it was sitting out here.

PA: Who was it that built their one-room house in the same place? Who lived in that house?

AL: Well, I guess Watson built that little old house; he had tenants in that little old house. Really, he built it for a cook when he stayed there. But after the old man died, then his son took over. Eventually the son died and so on. It was a little old tenant's house; it wasn't no big house. The son of the man that I told you about--the storm blew the house down on him--was named Flim Keaton and the son's wife was named Emma Keaton. They lived in that house. I think it was built for them.

PA: Did his wife cook in Watson's house?

AL: No, not at that time. Old man Watson didn't have no cook along in that time. The woman who was nursing the boy just cooked for him.

She was white. He stayed with them. All of them stayed there together. In fact, I know Miss Lucy Natchell¹--that's her name--did the cooking. Wasn't nobody else there to do it.

(move to the Vinton Cemetery) Not one tree was in that cemetery. You see that big old one sitting in yonder?

PA: Yes.

AL: That's about the only tree that was in there.

PA: Are there any blacks buried in that cemetery?

AL: No, they are all white. That's the Watson's cemetery.

(move to Barton)

PA: Do you remember where Trannie Wilson's place was?

AL: I remember where Trannie Wilson lived, but Trannie never did have no place; he lived--let me see--on that hill over there. (indicates Structure OB-3)

PA: Over here some place?

AL: Yes, across the road on the hill, on the other side of the road.

PA: Right in here, just across from the gate?

AL: Yes.

PA: Maybe we can stop there on the way back. You call that the Hutchinson place over there south of the road?

AL: That's right; Hutchinson's place is back over here. The trees wasn't here. All this was open.

PA: Was anybody farming in here?

AL: It wasn't too much farming but they were pasturing and keeping it open. It was open.

PA: We are at a brick-lined well on the road to the Uithoven house. Have you ever seen this well?

AL: You don't mean to tell me that's an old cistern well. Yeah, if you fall down in there, you can't get out. Any water in it?

PA: Yes.

¹Also spelled Natcher, Nacher, Natchez, and Natural.

AL: Yeah! That thing is full of water. That thing is deep; that's a well. Well, I don't remember it alright. I don't know who used that old well.

PA: Are those kind common?

AL: Yeah. They used to have plenty of those kind of wells just like that, and sometimes they would have just a flat top over them to cover them up. Sometimes they'd have built it around about that high and covered it in, so frogs and snakes couldn't get in it or rabbits couldn't jump in it and all that.

PA: Have you ever seen a kind of well where you just dig a big hole and let rainwater collect in it? Just to store rainwater?

AL: No, I haven't seen one like that, but they would dig these kind and water would seep up in those things. They wouldn't be for waiting on rain. If you dig them old things deep enough, water would seep up in them like a spring.

PA: Does that house look about the same as you remember it? (standing at Structure B-14)

AL: Well, it's some different, yeah. He moved out of here, didn't he?

PA: Yeah.

(move to Structure B-3)

Do you remember this place?

AL: Well, this ought to be Frank Andrews. He's back over here on this hill. You could see him from road at that time because there wasn't any timber. Yeah, this is it, Frank Andrew's old place.

PA: Do you remember the big tree?

AL: Oh yeah, I remember the tree. That's an old tree, sure rough, too.

PA: Do you know how long Frank Andrews lived here?

AL: Well, when I come to know Frank Andrews, he was here and I grew up into a man and married and still he was here; I think he died here. His son, Bradley Andrews, moved to West Point. The old man died in there, and probably Bradley is dead. I don't know; I don't ever see him. I'm thinking he is dead.

PA: Do you know what this house looked like?

AL: Well, it was just an old plain house made out of wood.

PA: We're not really far from that road that we walked up to the Uithoven's on.

AL: Yeah, I know it.

PA: He was pretty close to that road, or could he have been farther west?

AL: Well, I tell you. This has got to be Frank Andrews because there wasn't nobody else back here.

PA: Do you remember a family named Keller?

AL: Keller, I remember them alright, but I don't remember Keller living back here. Keller lived down near us, where I moved from. I don't remember him living over in here. Nobody ever lived over in here by Frank Andrews.

PA: Did you ever know a man named Joe Butts?

AL: I don't know the name Joe Butts, but I'm trying to think of a man by the name of Joe Harris. I know him. I don't know Joe Butts, but I did know Joe Harris. That could be the man. I didn't know Joe Butts.

PA: Do you know if there were ever any other houses west of us here. There is another long ridge that runs right over there to the west.

AL: No, the houses were practically out on the road near about at this time. There wasn't any trees in this bottom, just sage grass. I don't remember nobody staying back there but Frank Andrews.

PA: What was your first wife's name?

AL: She was named Mariah Daugherty, and after I married her, she became Mariah Lenoir.

PA: And you said Grant Moore married one of her sisters.

AL: Grant Moore married Ida Daugherty, and she became Ida Moore.

PA: Did you ever know an Ida Shirley?

AL: Yeah.

PA: Who's that?

AL: Well, that was Preacher Shirley's mother, the one that lives right on the corner where we turned.

PA: Yes.

AL: That's where she lived, right there on that corner, Ida Shirley.

PA: Did you ever know a Mary Shirley?

AL: Yeah. Mary Shirley was the old man Andrew Shirley's wife. Mary Shirley died a long time before Andrew Shirley. Eventually, he died.

PA: And Ida Shirley was Preacher Shirley's mother?

AL: Right.

PA: Who was his father?

AL: His father was a Mitchell. Let me see, Bryant Mitchell. My father taught school.

JM: Did he make you work harder than everyone else?

AL: Oh yeah, I'm fixing to tell you now. He would hire labor. They worked for him. They would go out in the field, and they wouldn't do any work. They'd just hitch up the mules to a tree and go to sleep in the shade. I was about fourteen years old so he asked me one day, "You reckon you can plow?" I said, "Yeah, sure." I never did say no about nothing hardly. I said, "Sure I can plow." He had two good great big able mules. He said, "Well, if you can plow, I'd be glad. I can't get nobody to do any work right for me. They cheat me. I'm going out in the field with you, and I'm going to hook the mules up for you." He did that, and he hooked them up to the double plow. I went down and sowed that furrow and come back. I wrapped that list so nicely. He didn't say nothing. I went back and did the same thing, and I went back and come again and did the same thing. He said, "I believe you are going to make it. I'm going to try you." Shucks, I got out there and got to working with them mules and plowed. I plowed! I mean me and the mules either one didn't stop until time to go home to dinner. That's the way it go here. So that was listing. After I got through listing, he said, "Reckon you can lift those middles out with a buster?" I said, "Oh yeah, I can do that." He said, "Well, if you can do that, I'd be so glad." He went down there and he fixed them up for me. Sure enough, I went on off. I was just lifting stalks up. He said, "Yeah, I'm glad to see that." I went on and I got it bedded up. Then I had to plant. He said, "Well, you reckon you can hold the planter on the row?" I said, "Oh yeah, I can do that." I did that, and that gone on. Well, it come to the cultivator time. He said now, "If you can run the cultivators, things are all over with. I'll be too glad. Reckon you can run it?" I said, "Oh yeah, I can run that." See, I was brought up on the farm and I took notice. My uncle used to plow. He was a good plower, a good plow man with a cultivator. He went down, and he hooked them cultivators up for me. I got that cultivator handle and pulled it on up that row and went on down there hugging that cotton. That's right. He was just like a man when they are running home to make a score say, "Safe." I just had to take the business for him. I went to school mostly in wet weather.

PA: So you didn't go much after that?

AL: Not much.

JM: What was the name of the uncle that you watched plowing?

AL: Oh, that was my Uncle Willard Lee Lucas.

PA: How is he related to you?

AL: He was my mother's brother. That's not our road, is it? (standing at Structure B-2)

PA: No, we're pretty close to the road. Can you see the road from here, Steve?

SM: No, you can't.

PA: But it's not very far?

SM: Well, the Barton Ferry Road is down there. Yeah, you can see it when it is clear.

AL: Yeah, you can see.

PA: The Andrews place is across from us, where we just were with the big tree and the chimney fall?

AL: Straight that way?

PA: Yeah.

AL: Well, I can't give an account of this one. There's some brick alright enough, but I don't know who lived here. I can't. . . .

PA: There wasn't a house standing here when you were a child?

AL: I don't remember one.

PA: Okay.

AL: Those are old bricks, old handmade bricks.

PA: Oh, they're handmade bricks?

AL: Yeah, they were made way back yonder. See, this is thick and all kind of. . . . Montgomery lived at that time up from the road, up on the hill.

PA: That's on your left or your right?

AL: That's on the left going to the river.

PA: It's on a high place?

AL: Oh yeah, on a hill, like this or higher.

PA: (standing at Feature 12, Structure B-4) They were digging in this area, and it looks like a deep circular pit. This is just part of it; it's got a lot of debris in it. Do you have any idea what that kind of thing would be? It's much deeper than that. They haven't finished yet.

AL: Yeah, I see. What is that I see? Is that a brick or iron down there or what?

SM: There's some pig bone in there; it's a jaw.

AL: Looks like a jaw.

SM: Yeah, there are some pieces of a pig, and these are some shells, mussels or oysters, or something.

AL: Well, what is that?

SM: That's just a brick and some wire, more metal, and this is more bone.

AL: Thunderation man! That much stuff washed in on that and filled in?

SM: Well, it looks like they were probably throwing their garbage in there on purpose.

AL: That's two feet and a half deep or near three.

PA: Did people dig pits like that for reasons?

AL: Well, I don't know. Since they run into all of that. . . . It's kind of amazing.

PA: You never heard of anybody doing that?

AL: No, I ain't seen anything like that. Of course, it had to fill in because that pig jaw or whatever is down there. I don't remember nobody burying trash like that. I don't know where that come from.

PA: Did people ever make wells that they didn't line with something, that just had the clay walls?

AL: Yeah. Sometimes they'd just dig that hole and just lay something over the top of it to keep children and something from falling in it. You'd just go there and drop a bucket down and draw it up.

SM: (standing at Feature 11, Structure B-4) Do you know what puts a little glaze on the bricks like this? Does that usually happen in a kiln or does that happen sometimes in a fireplace? It shines right over here, too.

AL: That's right. That's just something on the brick.

SM: Does that usually happen when they first make the brick?

AL: Have to; have to be. The dirt and the moisture can't soften it up enough to get that off. I guess they are burnt in there.

SM: Yeah.

AL: That's kind of a scorch. That foundation is the back of a chimney.

JM: No mortar in it.

AL: No, no mortar, just dirt. See, y'all don't know nothing about what I'm fixing to tell you. They used to build chimneys out of little old splits, just like you build a little rack. They built it out of grass and clay dirt and built that thing up. Folks would live in the house and make fire in the thing.

PA: Did those have brick at the bottom on the heart?

AL: Yeah, had brick at the hearth. It seems like this one here is kind of like that. There ain't no mortar in these things. It's not any mortar. When they built this chimney, they didn't know what mortar was. I mean lime to make up mortar and stuff. There's not any in there. They just laid the bricks. The world have made a big change.

PA: (move to Structure B-12) Do you think that this is March Montgomery's place?

AL: I know it is. Yeah, this is it. It's up on this hill. We ain't too far from back over there.

PA: What did this house look like?

AL: Oh, it was an old double house. It wasn't a fancy house; it was an old double house.

PA: How many chimneys did it have?

AL: Well, I don't know. It could have been a stack chimney.

PA: What's that?

AL: That's just a double chimney that goes right in the center of the house. A chimney with one stack up there would take care of two rooms. You had a fire over on this side in the room and a fire on this side. That's what you call a stack chimney.

PA: That's the kind that was in this house?

AL: It had to be. All of them bricks and things had to be a stack chimney. I bet you that was middleways in the house.

PA: Did it just have two rooms?

AL: Well, two rooms, a kitchen and. . . . In that time, they didn't build houses as neat and nice. They just built.

PA: Did you ever hear of a place called Whaley Hill?

AL: No, is it in here? It may have been here. The man who lived at the river down there was named Cogelin.² There were a couple brothers, Barney Cogelin and. . . . I just can't remember all those folks' names, but anyway he was a Cogelin and this was his place. It is the same place, but Cogelin stayed at the river and he managed the ferry.

PA: Did one of the Cogelins ever live in this house?

AL: Well, I can't remember; all I know is March Montgomery lived in it. I don't think a Cogelin lived in here because the Cogelin that lived at the river went blind in both eyes, and he stayed down there until he died. Then he had a brother named Barney Cogelin who left out from back here altogether.

PA: Would the water ever get up this high?

AL: No, goodness. If water had gotten up here, it would have been Noah's flood. (laughter) If water get up here on this hill, you just as well figure everybody is under water.

Yeah, I remember this old road used to come right up to this house. March Montgomery was Peter's father, and we are first cousins.

PA: Do you know if he had a well here?

AL: I don't know how in the world he got water really. I don't know whether he got water from down to the river. I'm thinking that's what he did. Yeah, I think he toted water. I come up here with Peter and one of his brothers, Charlie; he had two more brothers, one named Charlie and one named Sam. He had a little old one barrel muzzle-loader about like that. I remember coming up here one Sabbath day, and he had a cap he had to put on then. He'd load the little old gun and go out there and shoot at birds; we didn't hit nothing with it. I don't know what we were doing wrong; it's a wonder we hadn't got shot with that thing. (laughter)

JM: Well, you both lived to know about it.

AL: Yeah, that's right. I'd come around here and looks like to me that I can almost see myself coming right up here. Then, the yard was here.

²Also spelled Cogsdell.

PA: Did it have a dirt yard?

AL: It had a dirt yard. We fooled around out here shooting that gun and snapping and going on, putting them caps on it, and shooting at chimney sweepers.

PA: Were any of these cedar trees in here?

AL: No, this was open; there wasn't no trees.

JM: What about an outhouse?

AL: Well, they had one built around here, but it wasn't indoors.

PA: Where was it?

AL: Well, I'm quite sure that was on the back. It had to be back that way.

PA: Which way did this house face?

AL: Well, that house was double, north and south, I was telling you it undoubtedly had a stack chimney in it. All of those brick piles had to be in it.

JM: Do you remember the shape of the chimney? What it looked like on the outside?

AL: No, I reckon that chimney went up through the top, in the center of the house. It was built stacked in that day. What I mean by a stack chimney is they'd build one chimney and it'd take care of two rooms. That's just like this here. There'd be a room over here and a room over there. This would be a wall. The chimney would go up through the wall. When that chimney would go up, they would have a fire over here in this room, then close the door, and have a fire over on this side.

JM: So that's the shape of this chimney?

AL: Yeah.

JM: What would they do with garbage?

AL: Well, in that day there wasn't no garbage. What garbage there was you just threw it out, I reckon.

JM: Where would the Montgomerys throw theirs?

AL: Well, they didn't have nothing much to throw out. I guess everybody ate up everything they had. (laughter) Didn't throw out no garbage and stuff. The dogs would clean up. They'd feed the dogs from the table. They'd eat all the garbage, bones and whatnot. That's the way they did.

PA: What about broken things like trash, old cans and things?

AL: They just go out someplace or another in a little old hole or place where cattle or things didn't necessarily get in, and they'd just throw all of that in it, old broken bottles, whole bottles, and everything. They'd just throw them over there.

Addendum to the interviews with Andrew Lenoir.

In a conversation between Andrew Lenoir and Peggy U. Anderson which took place on August 27, 1980 in Mr. Lenoir's home, the following information was discussed.

On the east side of the Vinton/Aberdeen Road, going north from its intersection with the Barton Ferry Road, you would first come to Sy noward's house. It was an old double house with no open hall and with a drop shed on it. It was plank and had a central chimney. The next house was lived in by Bill Moore before he moved across to the west side of the road. This house had one plank room facing west with a drop shed room for the kitchen on the east side. The next house north was lived in by Bill Moore's brother, Jim Moore. His was an old "slavery" house. It was built of mortised logs that were pegged together. It was a double house sitting north and south and facing west. It had a chimney on the north end.

On the west side of the Vinton/Aberdeen Road, going north from Andrew Shirley's house, you would come to an old double house with an open hall that sat north and south. This was a little back off the road. Summer Moore lived here, as did Bill Moore after he lived in a house on the east side of the road. Paul Broyle and his family also lived in this house. The next house going north along the road was a plank house and Jeff Daugherty, Jr. lived there. The next house going north was the last house before you reached the Vinton Cemetery. This house was close to the road and was built of logs. Diddy Keaton lived there. Then the next house was north of the cemetery and that was Larry Keaton's house.

Bill Moore and Jim Moore and Grant Moore were brothers. They called Summer Moore cousin, but the exact relationship was not clear.

Mattie Crawford lived most of her life at Cox's Quarters. The woman named Maude Strong who cared for the Watson boy had a home in the Town Creek community.

THTP - Oral History Interview OH 131
An interview with
Joseph Mitchell

conducted and edited by
James M. McClurken



Joseph Mitchell was born in the community of Town Creek, Mississippi, a community of sharecroppers adjacent to the Vinton community. His birthdate is June 6, 1890. He is the oldest man to have been interviewed about the Vinton and Barton area, and is the grandson of Henry Thomas, one of the Vinton blacksmiths. Mr. Mitchell answered questions pertaining to lifeways and specific structures connected with the sites, including the Vinton cotton gin and gristmill complex.

This interview was conducted with Mr. Mitchell in his home by James McClurken on March 20, 1980.

MC: This is an interview with Mr. Joseph Mitchell for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by James M. McClurken. The interview is taking place in his home. His address is P.O. Box 214, West Point, Mississippi 39773. His phone number is 494-4878. The date is March 20, 1980.

Mr. Mitchell, what year were you born in?

MI: 1890.

MC: What is your birthday?

MI: June 6.

MC: Where were you born?

MI: Town Creek.

MC: Can you tell me a little bit about the village at Town Creek?

MI: It was a plantation.

MC: Whose plantation was it?

MI: J. L. Crump.

MC: J. L. Crump owned it?

MI: Yes, sir.

MC: Were your parents sharecroppers or tenant farmers?

MI: They were farmers.

MC: What kind of crops did they raise?

MI: Cotton, corn.

MC: Did your mother keep a little vegetable garden up by the house?

MI: Yes, it had a garden.

MC: Did your mother work in it mostly, or did your father do some, too?

MI: My mama worked, too.

MC: Did you have to work in the fields when you were a boy?

MI: No.

MC: What kind of things did you do?

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS TOMBIGBEE HISTORIC
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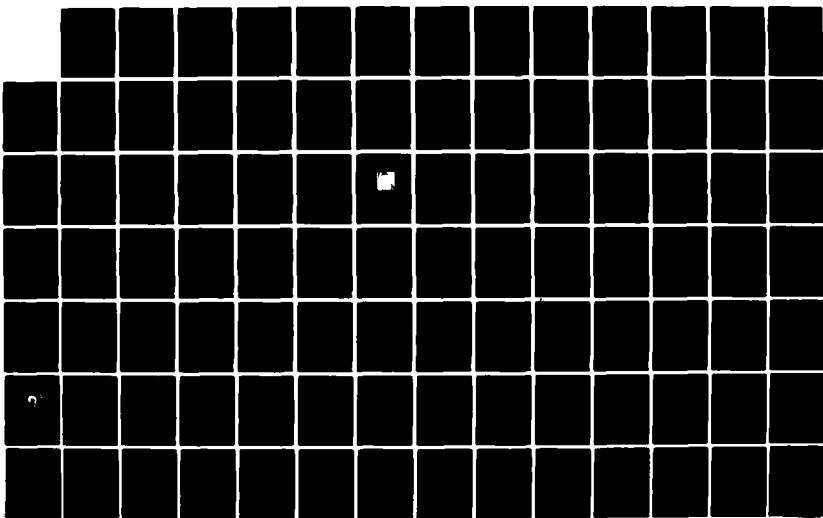
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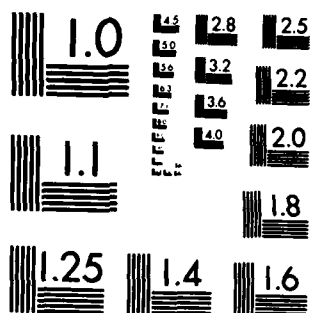
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MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS-1963-A

MI: Stayed there, fed chickens, and did all kind of devilment like children did do. (laughter)

MC: What kind of devilment?

MI: Kill chickens, do all kinds of devilment.

MC: What kind of games did you play?

MI: Shot marbles and played ball.

MC: Did you have a ball team or did you play with your brothers and the neighbors?

MI: Played with brothers and neighbors.

MC: How big was your family?

MI: We had a large-size family.

MC: How many brothers did you have?

MI: Two brothers.

MC: How many sisters?

MI: One sister.

MC: Do you remember their names?

MI: My sister's name is Bessie. My brothers were Bergen Mitchell and Will Shirley. My children's names . . . one of them is named Bryant, Jeddie Lee, and one of them is named Joe Junior.

MC: What kind of house did you live in there?

MI: A plank house like this.

MC: How many rooms did it have?

MI: It had four rooms.

MC: Did it have a hallway in the middle of it?

MI: Yes, sir.

MC: Did it have fireplaces in it?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: Did your mother cook on a wood stove?

MI: A big ranger.

MC: Did it have a water heater on it?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: Is that how you got your water for a bath, or did you go down to the river for a bath?

MI: It had a hot water tank on it.

MC: Did you do much swimming when you were a kid?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Did the boys and girls both go swimming?

MI: Girls didn't go.

MC: Did they have to stay around the house and learn how to cook?

MI: Yeah, they stayed around the house and learned to cook, cleaned up.

MC: Did your mother make your clothes for you when you were a boy?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Did she have a sewing machine, or did she do it by hand?

MI: Sewing machine.

MC: One with the pedal on the bottom of it?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: What other kinds of things did your mother do?

MI: Quilted, piece-up quilt, quilted quilts.

MC: Did she have to make your soap?

MI: Yes, sir. She made soap.

MC: Did you like the soap that she made? Did it get you good and clean?

MI: Yes, sir.

MC: Did it sting a little bit?

MI: It would burn. (laughter)

MC: What was your mother's name?

MI: Viola.

MC: What was your father's name?

MI: Bryant.

MC: Bryant and Viola Mitchell. Do you know who their parents were?

MI: America Thomas was my grandmother, and my father was named Bryant Mitchell.

MC: Were they from around that area, too? Out by Town Creek?

MI: Yeah, they lived there.

MC: So they spent most of their lives in the same place. Was their main occupation farming?

MI: Farming.

MC: What kind of tools did your dad keep around the place?

MI: Plows, section harrows, and handmade harrows.

MC: Did he ever do any hunting?

MI: Yeah.

MC: What kind of things did he hunt?

MI: Squirrels, coon, possums, rabbits.

MC: Did he bring them home dressed, or did your mother have to clean them?

MI: We dressed them when he came home.

MC: Did he sell the hides?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Do you know where he sold them?

MI: He sold them to—let me see now. What was the company's name? I can hardly think of the company's name, but I used to ship there myself.

MC: Where was it located?

MI: We had hides at home, outside of the porch, out there where they would dry.

MC: Were they stretched on boards?

MI: Yeah, had stretchers.

MC: Did your dad make the stretchers, too?

MI: No.

MC: Were they store-bought?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Where would he have to go to buy a stretcher like that?

MI: We'd go buy them down there at the hardware.

MC: Down in West Point?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: How did you go to West Point when you were a boy?

MI: Wagon.

MC: Did your daddy own his own wagon?

MI: Yeah.

MC: When did you go into West Point?

MI: We'd go on Saturdays.

MC: Did you go and spend the whole Saturday?

MI: No.

MC: You just went in for a part of the day, and then you came back home?

MI: That's right.

MC: Did you go to church on Sundays?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: What church did you go to?

MI: Town Creek.

MC: Who was preaching there when you were a boy?

MI: M. C. Adams. I studied preaching with him, Mitchell Adams. My stepfather was Monroe Randle.

MC: Did you go there and stay all day and have picnics on the ground?

MI: No, we didn't have no picnics.

MC: You lived close to the church, didn't you?

MI: Yeah.

MC: What did they use the church for during the week?

MI: Sometimes they would have suppers.

MC: Did everybody from all of the communities come together to have a big supper there, or was it just the members of your church?

MI: Members of the church.

MC: Was it ever used as a school?

MI: No, they had a schoolhouse built there.

MC: Where was the schoolhouse?

MI: Right off from the church a little piece.

MC: Who was your teacher at that school?

MI: We had Andrew Lenoir, and they had a lady named Carrie Miller.

MC: What kinds of things did they teach you?

MI: History, geography, arithmetic, grammar.

MC: Were they hard teachers?

MI: Some of them were, and some of them wasn't.

MC: What did they do when you didn't do your lesson?

MI: (motions)

MC: What does that mean?

MI: You got that paddle.

MC: I suppose that you were a good boy and never got one of those.

MI: No. (laughter)

MC: Do you remember the steamboats that used to come up the river?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: What did they look like?

MI: They looked like a big old. . . . Well, they wasn't so large. They had a . . . kind of like a fan turning over and over.

MC: A wheel?

MI: No, one of them that would turn over in the water.

MC: Was it on the side or on the back?

MI: On the back.

MC: How many stories high would they be?

MI: They would be just about as high as from the floor to the loft.

MC: Would they have a railing around the top of them?

MI: (motions negative response)

MC: Did they have big black stacks?

MI: Like a chimney?

MC: Yes.

MI: (motions negative response)

MC: No, they didn't have the smokestacks. What did they come up the river to get? Were they just for people to ride on?

MI: They'd bring cotton and different stuff up the river.

MC: Did they bring things to the people who lived up there?

MI: To the stores.

MC: What stores are around there?

MI: Vinton storehouse and. . . .

MC: Did a man named Ellis have one?

MI: (motions negative response)

MC: What about a man named Mr. Schrock?

MI: Do you mean Throck?¹

MC: Yeah, was he there then?

MI: Yes, he had a store.

MC: Which one did you shop at when you were young?

¹Variant pronunciation of Schrock.

MI: We went to Schrocks.

MC: Can you tell me what that store looked like?

MI: It was a wood store, frame store like this house, frame.

MC: Did it have one room?

MI: No, it had two.

MC: Was it one-story high?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: Was it made out of plank?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Was it lifted off the ground on pillars?

MI: Yeah.

MC: What way did the door face on that store?

MI: Let me thing about the Schrock store. On the west.

MC: What kind of things did he keep there?

MI: He kept shoes, pants, cloth.

MC: Did he keep canned goods?

MI: Yes, they kept sardines.

MC: What about tools?

MI: Kept hoes, axes, hammers, hatchets.

MC: Did they keep big barrels of things like flour?

MI: Yeah.

MC: What about coffee? Did people use coffee?

MI: They had sassafras tea, but it was not store-bought. You dug it.

MC: Did they have these things on shelves along the walls and a clerk to get them for you?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Did they keep candy?

MI: They kept plenty of candy.

MC: In big jars on the counter, I'll bet.

MI: Yeah.

MC: You say that there is another store at Vinton. Was that an old store when you knew it?

MI: Yes, sir. I knew it.

MC: Was that a one-room store as well?

MI: Yes, sir.

MC: Was it one-story?

MI: One-story.

MC: What way did its door face?

MI: Let me see. Which way. The door was in the west.

MC: Did it have a porch on the building?

MI: It had a small porch.

MC: So it didn't go the entire length of the building?

MI: Yeah.

MC: It did. I see. What kind of a roof did it have?

MI: Shingle roof.

MC: Was it wooden shingle?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: What did the inside of the store look like there?

MI: It looked just like a house with shelves in it.

MC: Did it have shelves on all four walls?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Did they keep tools in that store?

MI: Yeah, they kept hoes, hammers, axes, and hatchets.

MC: Could your father buy nails there?

MI: Yes sir. You could buy nails.

MC: Could your mother buy cloth there?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: Could you get your shoes there when you were little?

MI: No, they had to buy shoes. . . . Mostly you had to go to town to buy shoes.

MC: To West Point to buy shoes?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: Did this store have a heater in the middle of it?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: Was it out in the middle of the storeroom?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Did it have chairs around it so people could come in and sit and talk there on rainy days?

MI: Had a bench.

MC: Was it right by the stove?

MI: No, it was like that seat over there.

MC: So it was up against a wall. Did the men go there and talk on the rainy days?

MI: Some days they would; some days they wouldn't.

MC: It just depended on the day. Who worked at that store?

MI: Mr. Schrock.

MC: This was at the Vinton store?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Did Mr. Van Howard ever work there?

MI: Yeah, he worked there.

MC: What did he do?

MI: He worked down there in the store.

MC: Did he also run the post office?

MI: Yeah, he run the post office, worked in the post office.

MC: What did the post office look like?

MI: It looked kind of like this building here.

MC: Did it have a counter in it?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: Did the postman stand behind it?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Did he have pigeonholes on the wall where he would keep your mail as it came in?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Did your mother ever get any magazines?

MI: Yeah.

MC: And newspapers?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: Can you remember what newspaper she would have gotten?

MI: Commercial Appeal.

MC: Where did that come from?

MI: It came from Memphis.

MC: When you were kids, would you all read the newspaper?

MI: Yeah, we'd read the paper and look at the pictures.

MC: I'll bet that you read the funnies.

MI: That's right.

MC: Which one was your favorite newspaper?

MI: Press-Scimitar.

MC: Did your father ever use the ads in the Commercial Appeal to sell things or to buy things?

MI: He would read them.

MC: To find out what things were worth, huh?

MI: Yeah.

MC: You mentioned that the steamboats came up to get cotton. Did your

father ever have to take cotton down to the river and you went along when you were a boy?

MI: You mean baled cotton?

MC: Yes.

MI: (motions negative response)

MC: Where did he take his cotton?

MI: He carried it out to the railroad.

MC: At what station?

MI: IC.

MC: Was that at Strongs?

MI: No.

MC: Was it down by Waverly?

MI: No, it was at Vinton.

MC: There used to be a cotton gin there at one time.

MI: That's right.

MC: Can you tell me what that building was like?

MI: It was a large building, like this house.

MC: It had a steam engine in it. Was it a big steam engine?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Do you remember what kind of an engine it was, who made it?

MI: Let me see now. I think it was made by Adams. What was the name of that? I think it was Adams.

MC: What color was it?

MI: It was wrought iron.

MC: Was it a gray color?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: What did they hook up to the steam engine? Did they have several tools that they used it for?

MI: No, they just ginned cotton.

MC: Did they have a gristmill there?

MI: Yeah, they had a gristmill.

MC: Was that run by the steam engine, too?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Did they grind the corn, or whatever they were grinding, with stone wheels?

MI: Yes, sir.

MC: What happened to that building?

MI: It burned down.

MC: Do you remember how the fire started?

MI: Sure, no I don't.

MC: Was it just gone one night?

MI: One of the hands there. . . . Somebody had some matches or something in their pocket, somehow or another. The matches got in the cotton and grind . . . get in the cotton, then matches.

MC: Did people haul the leftovers away after the fire? Did somebody come and pick up the scrap metal?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Did that building have a chimney in it?

MI: (motions negative response)

MC: What would they have used brick for at that building?

MI: (motions negative response)

MC: Was there a house sitting right by the gin somewhere?

MI: No.

MC: Where was the nearest house to the gin?

MI: It wasn't very far.

MC: Was it on the old Vinton Road?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Was it on the east of the Vinton Road?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: So, it was just south of the gin on the old Vinton Road. What kind of a house was that?

MI: Log house.

MC: Did it have two pens?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Did it have a hall in the middle, in between them?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Can you remember who lived there?

MI: Let me see. Who lived in that house?

MC: That is a hard one to remember. Do you remember a house just north of the store?

MI: Old man Larry stayed there, didn't he? Larry Keaton.²

HMI: He stayed along in there somewhere.

MC: Now, he lived in the house just north of the store. Do you remember what kind of house he lived in?

MI: It was a log house.

MC: Was it also a double-pen house?

MI: Yes.

MC: Did it have a hallway in the middle?

MI: Yeah, it had a hallway.

MC: Did he keep a yard there?

MI: (motions negative response)

MC: Did he have a shade tree by the house?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Did he have flowers around it?

²Mr. Mitchell may not have heard the preceeding question and may be speaking of the southern house site.

MI: Let me see if there were any flowers around it. No, I don't think there were any flowers around that house.

MC: How did people keep their yards back then?

MI: They kept them swept with brush brooms.

MC: Did they put a fence around them?

MI: What, around the flowers?

MC: Around the yard.

MI: Yeah, they had a fence around them.

HMI: In them days they had palings, about five foot palings.

MI: Yeah, they had palings.

MC: Were you ever a guest at this house? Did you ever go there to visit Mr. Keaton?

MI: Yeah, we children would go up there all of the time.

MC: What did you do when you went someplace to visit when you were a kid?

MI: Play.

MC: Did you play out in the yard, or did you play in the house?

MI: Play out in the yard. When we'd go up about playing in the house, they got a brush broom and got on you.

MC: Do you remember Mr. Watson's house?

MI: Sure I remember it. That was the old Trotter house.

MC: Do you remember Mr. Trotter?

MI: No.

MC: What kind of things did they raise out there on the sandy land?

MI: Raised cotton and corn, peas, potatoes, watermelons.

MC: Good watermelons?

MI: I mean good ones, too!

MC: Where did they sell these things?

MI: They sold them in town.

MC: In West Point?

MI: Yes, sir.

MC: Did the steamboats ever pick any of the stuff up and bring it down-river?

MI: I can't remember.

MC: Do you remember where they brought the mail from?

HMI: I know that. It came from West Point, the mail.

MC: How did Mr. Watson bring his supplies in?

MI: Wagon.

MC: How often would wagonloads of supplies come in there? Quite often?

MI: Yeah, I think that they did.

MC: Were there any other people living there that you can remember?

MI: The hands on the place lived there.

MC: Did you know any of them?

MI: Let's see. Old man Tom Strong.

MC: Tom Strong. Where did Tom Strong live?

MI: He lived on the place.

MC: Was that south of the gin?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Did he live along the old Vinton Road?

MI: Yeah. The gin was on the road.

MC: I have a list with some names here. I'd like to see if you know any of these people or can tell me anything about them. Can you tell me anything about Mr. Job Trotter?

MI: Yeah, Job Trotter lived on the place.

MC: Did he live in another one of the houses along the old Vinton Road or was his back from the road?

MI: He lived on the . . . in a house down the road a piece.

MC: Down toward Barton Ferry or was it back toward the river?

MI: Down toward Barton Ferry.

MC: Was Parthenia Trotter related to Mr. Job Trotter?

MI: I think that was his wife.

MC: Did you know her? Did you know their kids?

MI: No, I can't remember none of their kids, now.

MC: Did you ever play with them when you were little?

MI: Sure, we children played together.

MC: Baseball?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Did you make your own baseballs?

MI: Yeah, we made our balls.

MC: How did you make them?

MI: Got a big old gray stocking, knitting like you called them, and made our balls.

MC: What did you wrap the string around?

MI: Just an old stocking, unraveled it.

MC: And just wrap it up good and tight. What did you cover it with?

MI: We'd just wrap it up good and tight, sew it.

MC: So you didn't cover it with anything. Did you know Mr. Bill Keaton?

MI: Bill Keaton. Who was Bill Keaton?

MMI: Was it a woman or a man?

MI: That was a man.

MC: I think it was a man.

HMI: That wasn't old Larry Keaton's brother was it, or some of his folks?

MI: They were some kin.

MC: But you are not quite sure how. How about Diddie Keaton?

HMI: That was old man Larry's sister.

MI: That was his sister.

MC: How about Flander Keaton?

MI: He was . . . old man Flander was . . . he was who. . . . Old man Flander Keaton, him and Bill Keaton used to get out palings and things to sell to the folks down on the prairie.

MMI: Were they brothers or cousins?

MI: They were brothers, I think.

MC: What about a Mr. Jack Young? Did you know him at all?

MI: Jack Young. Jack Young. Old man Jack Young . . . that was . . . let me see, who was it? They got palings and sold them to the folks.

MC: How about Jenny Carter?

MI: Jenny Carter. (motions negative response)

MC: Or a Willis Carter?

MI: I don't believe that I know him.

MC: How about the Lloyds, Jim Lloyd?

MI: Jack Lloyd.

MC: You don't remember them real clearly? How about a Mr. Stephen Whatley? Did he ever work in the store?

MI: Steve Whatley, let me see? Did Steve Whatley work in the store? I can't remember Mr. Whatley working in the store. No.

MC: Was he a farmer later on?

MMI: He had to farm; that was all they did then.

MC: Do you remember a Mr. William Whatley?

MI: I think that they were all brothers.

MC: How about Slater Russell?

MI: He was a . . . old man Slater. The biggest thing he done was fish.

MC: How did he fish?

MI: With set hooks, trout line.

MC: What kind of fish did he catch?

MI: Catfish, grinnels.

MC: Did he sell those fish?

MI: Sure, he sold them.

MC: How did he sell them? Did he go door to door?

MI: No, he'd put them in the wagon and go down the street. When folks see him coming, they'd go out and get those fish.

MC: Did he clean them first?

MI: No, he didn't clean them for them.

MC: You had to clean them yourself?

MI: Yeah, you had to clean them yourself.

MC: Was Frances Russell related to him? Was she maybe his wife?

MI: I don't know whether old man Slater had a wife or no.

MC: But he lived there on the Watson place, right?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Do you remember a Mr. Ike Crawford?

MI: Sure I know Ike. Married my cousin.

MC: So Ike Crawford is your cousin?

MI: He married my cousin.

MC: Where did they live?

MI: They lived on the Watson place.

MC: Did they stay there for a long time?

MI: Let me see when did Ike. . . . They stayed there a pretty good while.

MC: What did Ike do?

MI: They farmed.

MC: What was the name of the cousin that he married?

MI: Elenora.

MC: Elenora Thomas?

MI: Elenora Strong. Doc Strong was her dad. That was my uncle's daughter.

MC: Who was Mattie Crawford?

MI: Mat. . . .

MC: Did you ever visit your uncle when you were a child?

MI: Sure, I was always up to my uncle's house.

MC: Where did your uncle live?

MI: They lived down the road a piece, not far from there by Strongs Hill.

MC: Did they live down the Dry Creek Road?

MI: No.

MC: Did they live on the old Vinton Road?

HMI: The Dry Creek Road will carry them around by Strongs, yeah.

MC: So, that ways out of Vinton, though.

HMI: Yes, all Vinton. All that was called the Vinton Road because it lead all around.

MC: Do you remember Mr. Joe Harris?

HMI: Oh, yeah. I remember him. That was a fishing dude.

MI: Uh-huh!

HMI: I believe that I remember the house that you all are talking about. I believe that he was the one that was living in it at that time, when I could remember.

MI: Uh-huh.

MC: What house was it that he was living in?

HMI: That old log house that you all were talking about up at Vinton.

MC: The one that is just north of the store a few hundred feet?

MI: Yeah, when I remember, he was living there. I thought that he was a bachelor.

MC: What about a Mr. Dave Mathews?

HMI: Now, I can remember them a little, the old man. They lived . . .

they didn't call it Vinton. They lived out on the place that we called Cox, when I knew him.

MI: Uh-huh.

MC: So that was down a ways.

HMI: Yes, it was. That was south from Vinton.

MC: What about Dave Mathis?

HMI: Dave Mathis, that was one of his sons.

MC: And Andrew Mathis?

HMI: Andrew Mathis, I didn't know him. That was that deaf and dumb fellow.

MC: And Rob Mathis?

HMI: I heard talk of him.

MI: That was Boston's brother.

HMI: I thought Rob married . . . was that Boston's brother?

MI: Yeah.

MMI: Oh, I know what one you are talking about. . . .

HMI: I know what Boston you're talking about. You are talking about Boston in town.

MMI: Yeah, old man Boston. Jeff Oates married Boston's sister Mary.

MC: How about Lee Killingham?

HMI: I didn't know Lee, but I knew an old man in town by the name of Killingham, Nash Killingham. That was the only one I knowed. Now, he was as old as my great-grandma. He was a slavery-times person. He used to tell us about these airplanes. He used to call them birds because there would be some flying in the air.

MI: Uh-huh.

HMI: I was a little boy, but I can remember when he used to talk about that.

MC: Was Rose Killingham his wife?

HMI: He didn't have no wife when I first knowed him. I don't know who his wife was.

MI: I don't either.

MC: How about Mr. Andrew Lenoir?

HMI: The old man or the one that is down there now?

MC: He was your uncle's schoolteacher.

MI: He taught me, too.

MC: He was your teacher, too?

HMI: He was a real teacher. He'd sure get your jacket, man.

MC: He must have taught most of the children around here.

HMI: He did. He taught a lot of them around through here.

MC: How many years did he teach?

HMI: Oh, he taught until he died. When I got big enough to go to school, he was teaching. I reckon . . . and they was grown up, you know, and I was under them, and he was teaching then. He taught until he got disabled to teach, or until he died . . . all his days, I reckon. How old he was when he died, I don't know. You can ask his son down there when you see them. They can tell you.

MC: How about Mr. March Montgomery?

HMI: Now, that was Peter's daddy, wasn't it?

MI: Uh-huh.

HMI: What was his name? What did they call him? Marsh or March?

MI: Or March.

HMI: That was what I always called him. I reckon that that was his name.

MI: It was, March Montgomery. You know they had. . . .

HMI: Had to steal a mule or steal a horse or something.

MI: Uh-huh. They lived on up there on a tall hill called March Hill.

MC: Where was March Hill.

HMI: That was way across Town Creek, over on the way that you go out to that gravel pit down in there.

MMI: It sits on the Waverly Road, or just down.

HMI: Yeah, it is on the Waverly Road. When I first knowed him, he

lived down there where I was telling you that Dave Mathis lived, on the Cox place.

MI: Uh-huh.

MC: Was he a farmer, too?

HMI: There wasn't anything going on but farming then.

MC: So, everybody I have listed here is pretty much a farmer?

HMI: There was nothing going on but farming. They just had to go out there and cut grass. That's all that you could do.

MC: Did you know George Gresham?

MI: You mean Grisham?

HMI: I didn't know him.

MC: It could be.

MI: George Grisham.

MC: Was he a Vinton resident?

MI: Yeah, he. . . . That was all the folks knowed to do is farm.

MC: I'm not sure of the spelling on this, but is there a Tilithia Mathis that you would know?

MI: (no response)

MC: How about Lawrence Mathis?

HMI: Oh, I'll tell you who that is. That was their Aunt Lou over here and Lawrence Mathis.

MC: Is he Boston's brother?

HMI: I believe it was a different set of Mathis.

HMI: A different set.

MC: How about John Johnson?

MI: John Johnson. Let me see do I know any of them Johnsons.

HMI: (inaudible) that is Nell's family, Johnson.

MI: Yeah, they are some of Nell's folks.

MC: That is some of Nell's folks?

MI: Nell Johnson.

MC: Is Nell Johnson still living?

HMI: Oh, yeah. He is still up there not too far from Strongs. He is still living.

MC: How about Harrison Berry?

HMI: He's dead.

MI: Harrison has been dead.

MC: He was a farmer north of Vinton?

HMI: There wasn't nothing going on then but farming. All of them folks that you called was farmers. If they didn't grow it, they stealed it. (laughter)

MC: How about John Mansco?

MI: John Mansco.

MMI: Do you know him?

MI: I don't believe I do.

MC: How about J. H. Richardson?

HMI: I don't reckon that that was Mr. Luke Richardson. He was an old man, too.

MC: Did he live in the Vinton area, too?

HMI: If he did, it was before my time. When I first knowed him, he was down by Union Star where he is now.

MC: How about Pierce Mealer?

HMI: I heard a lot of talk about him.

MI: He's been dead.

HMI: I didn't never know him. I've heard a lot of talk about him.

MMI: He was as old as your granddaddy, wasn't he, old Pierce Mealer. (inaudible)

MC: Will you talk up a little?

MMI: All I know is what I heard. I knowed about Pierce Mealer. I knowed all of his daughters. I knowed his wife.

MC: Were they part of the Vinton community?

MMI: They stayed back down here, that's right.

MC: They stayed down here?

HMI: They lived down a little, that's right.

MC: Were they farmers as well?

MI: That's right. They were farmers.

HMI: Yeah, there wasn't anything going on here but farming?

MC: You said that your grandfather, Mr. Henry Thomas, was the blacksmith at Vinton.

HMI: I know that he was a blacksmith.

MC: Did you visit his shop when you were a child?

MI: Played there.

MC: Was it one big room?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Was it big enough that he could shoe a horse in there?

MI: No, he used to shoe them outside the door.

MC: What kinds of things did he make besides horseshoes?

MI: He didn't make no horseshoes. They bought them.

MC: Where did he buy them?

MI: West Point.

MC: Did he make things, or did he just fix tools?

HMI: The biggest he done was fix things.

MI: Uh-huh, fix things.

MC: Was he the blacksmith before your time?

MI: Oh, he was the blacksmith when I got big enough to know anything?

MC: Do you remember where the blacksmith shop was?

MI: On this Vinton Road.

MC: Was it north of the general store, or was it south of it?

MI: It was north of the road.

MC: How far east was it from Mr. Watson's house?

MI: It wasn't so far.

MC: Could you look out the door and see Mr. Watson's house?

MI: Sure you could.

MC: Was it, maybe, two hundred feet from the house?

HMI: No, I think it was a little farther than that.

MI: A little further.

HMI: From what I understand. I don't know where it was before my time, but I know where it was in my time. In my time, you see, Watson had gotten down here by Strongs.

MC: So, the shop was gone by then?

HMI: Henry Thomas still had a shop in my time, but it was on his own place. He was a good little piece from Vinton, but you could look and see all over there. It was about a quarter of a mile, I reckon.

MC: A quarter of a mile east, toward the river, from the house?

HMI: It was back west from Vinton.

MC: Okay. Now, if it was a quarter of a mile from his house, then how far north was it from the Barton Ferry Road?

HMI: It was about fifty yards, I reckon, from Barton Ferry Road, as you call it. The Barton Ferry Road is also called the Dry Creek Road.

MC: So, it was fifty yards to the north of Barton Ferry Road?

HMI: And about a quarter from Vinton.

MC: (Addressing MI) Is your nephew talking about a completely different building than the one that your grandfather worked in your time?

MI: That's the one that my grandfather worked in.

MC: So, it is the one north of the Barton Ferry Road, where the school was sitting?

HMI: There wasn't no school.

MI: That's right.

MC: Was it on the west side of the Vinton Road.

MI: (no response)

MC: Do you remember Mr. Levi Hollins?

MI: Sure, I know him.

MC: Was he a blacksmith, too?

MI: (motions negative response)

MC: What did he do for a living?

MI: Farmed.

MC: He too farmed. Do you know where his farm was?

MI: Let me see where old man Levi farmed. I know it by heart. He was a trustee of a school. I am trying to think where old man Levi lived. I used to go there and pick up chestnuts.

MC: What did you use the chestnuts for?

MI: Eat!

MC: Did you roast them?

MI: No, sir. Didn't roast them. Just cracked them and eat them.

MC: Yeah? And you liked those.

MI: Them things was good.

MC: What other kinds of nuts did you gather?

MI: Scaly barks, hickory nuts, walnuts.

MC: Boy, you were busy. Did you ever sell those, or did you just keep those to eat them?

MI: Kept them and ate them.

MC: Did you keep baskets of them in the house?

MI: No, I kept them in my stomach. (laughter)

MC: Didn't you bring any home?

MI: Yeah, I brung them home, put them up.

MC: What did you keep those nuts in?

MI: Kept them in the house in a barrel, in the smokehouse.

MC: Did most everybody have a smokehouse behind their place back then?

MI: Most of them had smokehouses.

MC: Did your dad ever butcher?

MI: Yeah.

MC: How often would he butcher?

MI: Once a year.

MC: What did he butcher, beef or pork?

MI: Beef and pork.

MC: Both? Did you smoke them or would you salt them?

MI: Salt them, salt it down, salt it down.

MC: Did you like that salty meat?

MI: Yeah.

MC: When you are curing your meat with salt, how do you go about doing it?

MI: (goes through the motion of covering it)

MC: You covered it with salt. Did you have big boxes that you put it in?

MI: That's right.

MC: Did you leave it in that box until you were ready to use it, or did you take it out and hang it up?

MI: Take it out and hang it up.

MC: How long did it keep that way?

MI: Until you eat it all up.

MC: So there was no end to the time that it would keep once you did it? Did your neighbors come and help with the butchering?

MI: Sure did. We'd help each other.

MC: Did everybody do it at the same time?

MI: No.

MC: So your dad kept pigs and cows on the place, too?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Did the hands on Mr. Watson's farm keep them, too?

MI: Yeah, some of them kept hogs.

MC: Even though they were sharecropping for him, they kept their own animals?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: Did Mr. Watson keep animals there, too?

MI: Yeah, he kept animals.

MC: Did he have a barn?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Where was his barn?

MI: North of the store.

MC: Was it behind his house?

MI: No, it was on the road.

MC: Was it one the Vinton Road?

MI: The Vinton Road.

MC: Was it north of the store?

MI: That's right.

MC: Was that to the farther north than the log house that Mr. Larry Keaton lived in?

MI: Yes, sir.

MC: What kind of barn was it?

MI: It was built out of slabs.

MC: So it was slab lumber?

MMI: That's what it is.

MC: How big was it?

MI: It was a big barn.

MC: How many animals could he keep in it?

HMI: He had hands. I would imagine thrity-five or forty. With his hands he had to have a big. . . .

MC: When you were a boy, where did the steamboats dock at Vinton?

MI: They just come up the river. We'd hear them coming and go down there to look at them.

MC: How did you hear them coming?

MI: They'd blow.

MC: Did they have whistles?

MI: Sure, they had whistles.

MC: How far away could you hear that whistle?

MI: You could hear it for miles.

MC: Where did they pull up? Did they pull up south of Millstone Creek?

MI: No, they come up the river and bring cotton. . . .

MC: Did they have a machine, a ramp there to load the cotton onto the steamboats?

MMI: Uh-huh. I know that.

MI: They'd bring that cotton somewhere down there.

MC: Was there a warehouse where they kept the cotton? Did they keep the bales in the same building, or did they keep them in a separate building?

MI: They had a cotton yard there where they put them.

MC: Did it have a roof over it to protect it from the rain?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Where was that from the gin?

MI: It wasn't nowhere from the gin.

MC: It was right by the gin?

MI: Out in the yard, the gin yard.

MC: Did they have a cotton slide to load it from the top of the bluff at Vinton down onto the steamboat?

MMI: What he means Rev. is how did they unload the cotton down there when they got down to the river with it. Didn't they have some way to get it off the boat and on land? How did they do it? That's what he wants to know.

MI: Dump it over.

MMI: On what, on the raft?

MI: Yeah.

MMI: Well, alright. That is what he is trying to say. Make it clear to him. (laughter)

MC: So, they just dumped it off the top of the bluff?

MMI: Uh-huh.

MC: Do you remember the names of the steamboats that you saw?

MI: No, sir.

MC: That was too long ago, huh? There was one other question that I had to ask you about the gin. Was there a little road that ran off the old Vinton Road, in front of the gin, where you could turn off the road and pull up to the gin? It would be parallel to the Vinton Road.

MI: What did you say?

MC: Was there a road that ran off the old Vinton Road, right up to where the gin was, a driveway of sorts?

MI: Yeah.

MC: So, people would pull off the road with their wagonload of cotton and pull up to the gin?

MI: That's right.

MC: Was there a sucker on the gin?

MI: Yeah.

MC: It sucked all the cotton off and ran it on through. What did they do with the cotton seed?

MI: They shipped them. They would blow them seeds in the shed, and they ground them up. Some of them didn't sell none of their seed. They would grind them up.

MC: Would they use them to feed their animals?

MI: That's right.

MC: What did your dad do with his. Did he feed it, or did he sell it?

MI: What, the seed?

MC: Yeah.

MI: He sold some of them, and he kept a lot of them.

MC: Did you know some people called Coltrane?

MI: Coltrane. . . . Don't believe I did.

MC: Did people ever talk about the old town of Barton?

MI: (nods affirmative)

MC: Yeah?

MI: Water washed it away.

MC: Yeah? Did you know any people who had lived there?

MI: No, sir.

MC: Were there any old buildings left in your day?

MI: All gone. Water washed them all away.

MC: Did people ever talk about the old town of Colbert?

MI: Yeah, they talked about Colbert.

MC: What did they say about Colbert?

MI: They said that water washed it away. (laughter)

MC: Were there any houses on the Cox place?

MI: Yeah.

MC: Did they have a town there?

MI: They had a village, a store for them at the Cox place.

MC: How many houses would you say were in that village? Can you make a guess?

MI: No.

MC: Now, we have talked about the Mathises who lived down there. Were there any other families, who lived there that you can remember?

MI: Let me see. Old man Dave Mathis, he lived there. Old man March Montgomery, he lived there. Robert Warren lived there, too.

MC: Did the people down at the Cox place come up and visit the people at Vinton quite often?

MI: Not that I know of.

MC: Didn't you go very far to visit?

MI: Yeah, we went a good piece to visit.

MC: Well, Mr. Mitchell, I think that I would like to end this interview here for the day. I have enjoyed hearing what you've had to say, and I would like to interview you again when I have some more questions to ask you.

MI: Alright.

MC: Thank you very much.

MI: You're welcome.

THTP - Oral History Interview OH 132
An interview with
Josie Kennedy

conducted and edited by
Peggy Uland Anderson



Josie Kennedy was born in Columbus, Mississippi in 1911. She is the daughter of Joe Harris, and she married Barney C. Cogsdell who was a member of an old Vinton family. In the years that Mrs. Kennedy resided in the Vinton community, she became acquainted with many of the residents. Tales of her personal interaction with the people of Vinton and detailed accounts of the structures in which they lived give much insight into the lifeways of her generation.

This interview with Mrs. Kennedy was conducted in her home by Peggy U. Anderson on March 24, 1980.

U: This is an interview with Josie A. Kennedy for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by Peggy Uland at Mrs. Kennedy's home on March 24, 1980. Her address is Route 2, Box 276A, Tupelo, Mississippi 38801. Mrs. Kennedy's telephone number is 844-9694.

Mrs. Kennedy, could you tell me when you were born and where?

K: I was born in 1911 in Columbus, Mississippi, and we lived there until I was ten years old. My mother died when I was ten, and when she died, we moved away and went up out east of West Point. We wasn't in West Point. We lived out east of West Point. I went to school in Vinton until I was sixteen years old. Then when I got married, I left Vinton and moved back to Columbus. When I was seventeen years old, we went back to West Point and lived there. I went to that school from the time I was ten on. I can't figure how many years. I went to the sixth grade; that's how far I went. Mother had left two babies, and it was always my turn to take care of them and all the rest went to school. So, I went to school from the time I was ten until I was sixteen. Then I married and went back to Columbus. But we lived up there before I married. Would you like that, too?

U: Yeah.

K: Before I married, we lived on the old Phillips place which was about a mile from Barton Ferry. We lived there for, I'd say, about four years, and then we moved to the old Whaley Hill house. It's an old log house up on top of the hill from the ferry where everybody went in high water. We lived there for one year, and then we lived down there at the ferry itself for about three or four years. I don't know just how many years we lived there. Anyway, that's where they lived the year I run the ferry. My daddy was out of town and I run it when I was sixteen years old. After I got married, we went up thirteen miles east of West Point and bought a home. We lived there about seven years, no, about six years, I guess. Then we moved across Town Creek and lived over there one year. Then we moved back to West Point, on Railroad Street in West Point. You have all the names of the people I know, so you can figure out the first names if you can find them in the telephone book.

U: You've moved around a lot, haven't you?

K: Oh yeah. Papa was left with all of us children; there was seven of us. Two of the children died as babies. He had to work and we just moved around here and there wherever he could get work. After Mother died, he wouldn't remarry for years and years. I was sixteen when he finally remarried. He lived with his wife for a few years, and then they separated. Oh, I forgot about the Uithovens. They lived just about a half a mile from us on down toward the ferry from the Phillips place. My daddy finally married Mrs. Uithoven's sister.

Mr. Uithoven was an old doctor from Holland, and he had three children--Guise, and Frances, and Eldridge. We all went to school together. We walked three and a half miles from there up to Vinton across the woods to go to school. If we had went the road, it would have been better than five miles; it would have been about six miles.

Somebody else I forgot is Mr. Tom Watson.¹ He lived at the cemetery just before you got to the school. Miss Lucy Watson² lived there really, but he didn't live there. He lived in West Point somewhere. She lived there and she had an afflicted son. It wasn't her son; it was Thomas's brother. It wasn't her son, and I don't know how she come in. She lived just about a mile from Vinton. I used to take the kids and carry both of them--one was eighteen months and the other one three years old--walking that three and a half miles across that woods to go to that school. There was a lady next door, a little ways from the school, that kept the kids for me while I went to school. Miss Lucy lived on that road. She had Thomas's brother, Julian. Yeah, Julian was his name. They lived right across from where the cemetery is on that road going up toward Vinton. They lived right across there, and then the Kellers lived just a little further up toward the school.

U: On the same side of the road as Miss Lucy?

K: Yes. Just in a hollow and up on a little hill. They lived there. I just thought of the woman's name. Her name was Nancy, but I can't think of her husband's name. That's about all the people I knew out there, I reckon.

U: Who was Nancy?

K: Nancy Keller. She was Mrs. Uithoven's daughter. She married a Keller, and she lived just about a quarter of a mile from Miss Lucy Watson. I reckon her name was Watson. Now, I don't know that, but Julian was a Watson. He was Thomas's brother.

U: Miss Lucy took care of him?

K: Yeah. I don't know how she come in. I don't know if she was his aunt or something, but she took care of him. Out where we lived, on that little map you've got, I knew quite a few people. Some of them are colored. Georgia Moore used to work for me, raised my kids. Then there's a colored woman, Crecy. I can't remember her last name.

U: Crecy Gladney?

K: I just don't remember. I don't know what her name is. I know her

¹Henry Watson.

²Lucy Natcher.

first name was Crecy. We went by and saw her two or three years ago, and she just hugged me, and we like to never got away from her.

U: Did she used to take care of you?

K: No, she took care of the kids. Every time I had a baby she'd run and get the younguns. She loved my kids just like they were hers. Mr. Suggs that lived over there across the creek; I can't remember his name.

U: May I ask you a few questions?

K: Yeah, sure.

U: What was your father's name?

K: Joseph Daniel Harris.

U: Do you know where he was from?

K: He was from Vernon, Alabama. They came from Vernon after they were married. Belle Zora Crow was my mother's name. They moved to Columbus when. . . . I don't know if any of the children were born in Vernon or not, but anyway we lived there in Columbus when I was born. From me on down was all born here. They come there to Columbus and lived there till Mother died, the year I was ten years old.

U: Do you know what brought your father to the Barton Ferry area?

K: Well, just rambling, hunting work, I imagine. He had to work all the time because he had all us kids to support and no help. I don't really know how he got out there.

U: You said your mother had a lot of children. What are your brothers' and sisters' names?

K: My oldest brother is Bobby Harris. He lives down here at the Air Force Base at Columbus. The next one was Minnie Lee; the next one was me; the next one was Belle, and the next one was Lucille. Belle and Lucille was the ones younger than me. We were all born out at Mr. Will Evans's place. It's east of Columbus, if I remember right. He owned, I would call it, a plantation, a big farm, or something out there. They farmed, I know, and we lived out there. That's where my husband and I went when we first got married, where Papa had moved away from. We went and got the same house that we had all lived in.

U: You told me that you lived for awhile on the Phillips place.

K: Yeah, the Phillips place. That's about a mile and a half from Barton Ferry. When you come out of West Point, you come out on a road. . . . There's one that goes on down to the ferry, and there's one that turns and goes this way, up to Vinton. Well, we

lived down that road just about halfway from there to the ferry. It was up on a high bank beside the road. The house is burnt, but you can see the. . . . It's up on a high bank, up beside the road.

U: What did that house look like?

K: It was just two bedrooms and a big hall in the middle. Then it had an ell kitchen and dining room on the back of it. It had a flowing well. Of course, I don't guess they're there now, but there was a lot of big water oak trees around it.

U: Was it made out of plank or was it log?

K: Yeah, it was made out of plank. It had two bedrooms, one on each side. Of course, now people have a living room and a bedroom, but we used both for bedrooms and a big hall. If I remember right, it was twelve feet wide between the rooms.

U: Was it open?

K: Yeah, open, all the way open. Then on the east end, on the back side of the south room--I think it was sitting east and west--there was an ell kitchen and dining room. It had a little boardwalk to walk out on from the house to that.

U: When did you live there?

K: When we got married, that's when we lived there. I left there and went. . . . That's close to the Uithovens. See, my stepmother was Mrs. Uithoven's sister, and we lived close together. That farm is where I left from and got married.

U: You told me that you also lived in a house that people used during high water called Whaley Hill?

K: Whaley High-water house, that's what they called it. It's up on a big hill from the Barton ferry. There's a house and a barn there at Barton ferry, or there used to be when we lived there. Then there's a cotton patch about a quarter of a mile, I guess, to this high hill and way up on top of that hill where no highwater ever bothered it, was an old house. It was made with plank, but on the inside it had those little strips and mortar or whatever it was that they put on the inside, plaster or something. It had little strips about a half inch apart and about a half inch wide all over it, and the mortar or whatever was put on the strips. It was an old, old house.

U: How many rooms did it have?

K: It had four rooms, big old rooms. You could live in one room.

U: Did it have brick chimneys in it?

K: It had one brick chimney in the middle and a fireplace on each side

of the chimney. It had kind of a hall that went down on each side of the fireplace into the back room. If I remember right, it had four rooms, big old rooms. It must have been rich people or something who lived in it because it was a huge place and it had that plaster. Of course, the plaster was falling out when we lived there. It had been a nice house.

U: If I was going down the road that goes past the Phillips place, down to the ferry, would I be able to see that on the left?

K: I'm sure it's not there. It was about ready to fall down when we lived there. But you can see the hill; you should be able to see that.

U: When it was there, was it close enough to that road that I would have been able to see it?

K: Oh, yeah. It would be on the left, I believe. It's been so many years since I've been out there. I believe, though, that it's on the left. It was just up from the ferry. I don't know what's there now, but there used to be a house. Then right across from the road that come in there was a barn. Right down before you turn to go to the river, there was a big spring on the right, right down a hill from the house. There was a big spring down there. We kept it cleaned out because that was our water. This Whaley house was sitting up on a high hill. It was a big house. When you left it, you just went down a little hollow and right up on another hill was the Uithoven home. It was on the left going out from West Point. I imagine the Uithoven's home might still be standing. I don't know. It was a fairly new house, looked like. The one we lived in, I know, got burned down. They made a store onto the old Phillips place, and all of it burned. You'll know it if you ever pass it. It's red clay and it's a high hill, just as high as that ceiling. We used to jump off it barefooted when we were kids, when the snow was on the ground. I never will forget that. (laughter) We'd run out there barefooted and we'd always run out in the snow. We'd run out and jump off of that hill and we couldn't get back up. We'd have to go way down to get to the driveway to come up to the house, and go back up to it. Sometimes our feet would be almost froze, but we really enjoyed it.

We farmed when we lived there. Our cotton was up on the hill, and all our corn was down on the bottom, down in the hollow. They called it the bottomland. We farmed all the time we lived there, and then I can't remember to save my life where we went first when we left there. Sometimes I can think and sometimes I can't.

U: Would this Whaley Hill house be just on the big hill there on the other side of the spring?

K: No, this is the ferry house. That is down there where we lived to run the ferry. It wasn't on a hill; it was on a flat, but it went

out there and it went down the hill. The road come right around where it went down. It went down pretty sharp and there was a road down there that went around to the ferry. The spring was just right across the road. It would be woods now, I imagine, but then it was just like in a field, grew up bushes, but it wasn't in woods. It was a big spring; we had a great big old piece of a culvert, I guess that big, that we put down in it and kept it cleaned out. That's where we got our water.

U: What was that house like that the ferryman lived in?

K: Well, I don't remember. There used to be a big old house there, a great big old one. It was might near a mansion. I don't remember it. It was there when we first came to West Point, but I never did see it. They say it was a big house with two stories, and it had a porch out with a banister around it. It was a beautiful home, but I don't know who owned it at that time. They say it was a beautiful place, and that was when they first put the ferry in there. That's the way I understood it, just hearing it here and yonder, but I don't know if it burned or rotted down or whar happened. But they said it was a beautiful home, and it had two stories. I imagine it was built about the same time that old house up on the hill was because they had both been good houses. It might have burned; I don't know what happened to it. When we lived there, the best I remember, there were two big rooms and a little shedlike built out on the back of it for the kitchen and things. That's the way I remember it now. I'm not sure, but that's the way I remember it.

U: It was in the same place that this big house was in?

K: Yeah, they built it back. Some of the old trees are still standing there that are burnt on one side. There was one side of them trees that looked like they'd been burnt. I don't know whether they just died or just burnt. Anyway, some of the old trees were still standing where the old house was. In fact, there were a bunch of crepe myr bushes way out from the house where if it had burned, it wouldn't have hurt them. They were old and scrubby when I first seen them. We lived at the Waverly ferry for a long time.

U: When was that?

K: That was back after I'd married. I had three or four children when I lived there. We didn't fool with the ferry; we just rented the house closest to the ferry. The people who run the ferry lived up above us. That's when I went to work in West Point. I worked at the Knickerbocker Company for over a year. I don't know whether it's still there or what. That's where they made shorts and pajamas. That's when we moved on Railroad Street. I was working at the Knickerbocker Company and of course, that was all the way across town. I walked backwards and forwards to work. I wore high heels at that time; I'm paying for it now, too. (laughter) We lived right on the outer edge of town, and the Knickerbocker Company at that time was right on the edge of town.

U: That's a long way.

K: Yeah, but I'd walk it and come in home and do my work, and get out and play hide-an-peek with the kids. I guess that's the reason I'm in the shape I'm in now.

U: Was your dad a farmer?

K: Yeah, he was a farmer. We lived in town there in Columbus for awhile before Mother died. I don't remember what he done then. As far back as I can remember, we lived in a little old one-room house with a little shed kitchen built out on the back of it. The old chimney's still standing there on Bell Avenue. My Aunt Josie lived just about a block down past us, and they just sold her property about three years ago. I can't remember what he did when he lived down there, but as far back as I can remember, he has farmed.

U: Do you know if he ever fished for a living?

K: Well, we fished a lot; we farmed along with it. Me and him spent many, many nights on the Tombigbee River fishing.

U: At night?

K: At night, yeah. We'd take the old wagon. He loved roasting ears and I did, too. If the corn was in, we'd pull us off some corn and throw it in the wagon and take us some quilts and get under the wagon and sleep all night. We'd get up once in awhile and go run the trotlines. We really enjoyed that. I love to fish.

U: If I was going to go fishing on the Tombigbee at night, what kind of equipment would I need and where would I go and what kind of fish would I catch?

K: Now, you would need something to keep you away from the snakes. Back then the snakes weren't the way they are now; the woods were kept burned off and snakes weren't around so much. We'd just take whatever we thought we wanted to eat; he always had to have his coffee. He'd just make it in an old molasses bucket on a fire in the woods. We usually carried something. We didn't have to cook--only the corn. He loved boiled corn so we always carried that when it was in season. And he'd go fishing. Me and him would probably go Friday night and stay all night. We'd run trotlines all night and catch crawfish in the seine to bait our lines with. We'd catch catfish and buffalo and grennells. If you were going over to the river now to stay all night, you'd have to have a camper or something you could fasten up because the snakes are so bad down there.

We were running a line one night; I was sitting on one end of the boat paddling for him to run the line, and he was on the other end of the boat. I went up under a willow tree at one end of it. A great big old snake fell out of that tree right down in the boat. (laughter) You talk about somebody almost going into the river, I did. It fell off into the boat and Papa killed him.

We caught one catfish down there just above the ferry that weighed ninety-seven pounds. That thing's head was like that, a big old head. If he caught enough, Papa would take them in the wagon and go around on Saturday and sell them to mostly colored people around where we lived. He made a little money, but we just didn't have that much money. We made our own meal and our own flour. We had our potatoes and our canned stuff from the garden. We just didn't need much of anything. He wouldn't go to town but once a month. I was about twelve or thirteen years old before I knew what bologna was. He wouldn't ever take us to town; we'd stay there at home, and he would go to town and get what he wanted. We raised most everything we needed.

U: Did he ever fish with nets?

K: Yeah, he fished with nets. I wouldn't help him with nets; I couldn't handle them. You have to have those big hoops around them to open up a place for them to go in. You start making the thing up here, and it'd be big, and as you'd go down, you'd make it small. They'd go in there and then they couldn't come back out. Yeah, we fished with nets.

L: What would you make them out of?

K: Cord, twine they call it. You buy this twisted twine. He made his hoops out of hickory wood. We'd make them and get them made and go all the way around them tying up the hoops where they couldn't come loose. Some of them are as long as this room.

U: They were over ten feet.

K: Yeah, well, I guess they might have not been over ten feet. They were almost as big as this room, about ten feet long, I'd say. The first hoop on them would be about six feet high. You'd drop them out and the big part would be upstream where the fish went inside of this big part. They'd swim around; they couldn't come against the water good so they'd wind up going through that hole. Back a little further, we'd have another hole. They'd come back in the back and they couldn't get out. He'd catch a lot of fish sometimes, and he'd get them out and get his wagon out and go around and sell them. I have known him to carry them to West Point because he couldn't sell them all out in the country. Everybody in the country fished themselves so he'd take them to West Point sometimes.

U: How did he keep the fish like that cold?

K: He'd dress them and go early in the morning. We didn't have ice out there; we didn't even know what a refrigerator was. To keep our milk cool enough to drink, we'd put it in jars and sink it in the spring, and we'd have good cold milk for dinner. We always had a cow and raised our own hogs. It was a good life, but people think it was awful. It was hard, but it was a good life. I think it was. We just got by the best we could and that was all we could do. I've seen times when we didn't have as much as we wanted to eat, but we

never starved. We had a lot of fish. Sometimes we'd go fishing in lakes or branches, what we called creeks. We fished a lot in Town Creek just to have a mess to eat. We'd catch small ones; we didn't catch no big ones much. We caught a lot of grennels. There was so many big gar in that river that it was a sight. I went down there by myself one day to run the lines, and I caught one, bill and all, that was six feet long. I couldn't get him in the boat, so I lay down on the bow of the boat and held onto that trotline and kept him headed in the right direction and made him pull me back to the ferry about a mile and a half. (laughter) We were just going sailing down through there.

U: What kind of boat do you use?

K: Skiff, about ten or twelve foot, about twelve foot, I guess. Papa made his own boats; he made everything.

U: How did he make a boat? What did he make it out of?

K: I don't remember what kind of lumber it was. It seems like it was sweet gum; I'm not sure. But he cut his own lumber or bought it if he could find a place he could buy it. He'd cut the logs and take them to the mill and have them sawed. It wasn't sweet gum; it was poplar. That's what it was, poplar. It's light, and it doesn't absorb too much water. He always kept a good boat on hand.

U: How long would a boat like that last? Would you have to make one every few years?

K: If you kept them painted and took care of them, they'd last ten years, I guess. They'd last a long time. He didn't leave them in the water when he wasn't using them; he'd take them out and put them up and dry them and paint them. He took care of his stuff. They'd last him a long time.

U: Did he ever make boats for anybody else?

K: Not that I know of. He used to work helping build houses. I don't know what part he done, but I know one time he was helping to build a house. He farmed, and in the wintertime he'd just hunt whatever kind of work he could find. We never got nothing ahead. He had to work in the field all the time in the summer, and in the winter he'd get out and work a little.

U: Did he ever hunt or trap?

K: No, I don't recall him ever hunting, except rabbits. We'd go and hunt rabbits. When it'd snow, we'd catch rabbits to eat. We always had our chickens and our turkeys and our geese and our ducks, so we didn't really need to hunt. We just went rabbit hunting because we enjoyed catching them.

U: You mentioned that you made your own meal. Was there a place to do that out there?

K: Well, there was, but we had our own mill. You sat and turned it with your hands. You'd have to run it through two or three times to ever get it fine enough. On the next to the last grinding, we'd take out some coarse grits, and then we'd run it through again and it'd be meal. We had to buy our flour, and we made our own hominy. We always kept a barrel of hominy. We made our own sauerkraut out of collards. Papa would put up a barrel of kraut every fall. We just didn't really need nothing much, back in them days. Now if it was today, we'd need a whole lot, but back in them days, we just had what we needed. We had our hogs and our cow and usually an old mule or two and our chickens and stuff like that, anything we wanted. We had our eggs and we just really didn't need nothing, but coffee. I have seen Papa take okra and dry it and grind it up and make coffee with that. He'd run it through the mill and make coffee with it. He said that it was pretty good; I don't remember.

U: You said there was a place where you could get meal ground?

K: Yeah, you could go to a mill and have it ground. They'd grind it for a third, I believe it was. You didn't have to pay for it; you'd give them a third of your corn or something like that and they would grind it. We usually ground our own; we had a corn sheller. We could shell our corn.

U: Was there a place like that out in the Vinton/Barton area?

K: No, you had to go to town for that. I think it was town. I'm not certain, but it wasn't close around there because we would have seen it.

U: Was there a molasses mill out there?

K: They put up those molasses mills when time comes to use them. All they do is put a thing up there and hitch a horse to it and go around and around to mash the juice out. There was one in every community, I reckon. I don't remember where Papa took his, but he carried it somewhere. It was not right close to the house; it was in the vicinity somewhere. We had our own molasses and butter. We just didn't need nothing.

U: Where would your dad keep barrels of meal and molasses and sauerkraut?

K: He'd keep the sauerkraut in the barn, and the meal and corn and stuff was in the crib, and he would set the molasses out under a tree somewhere. They had a wooden top on them that couldn't leak. They had a peg--a bung, I believe, is what they called it--drove in the side of the barrel where you pull it out and pour your molasses out.

I can remember when we lived out at Columbus--then, there was four of us--we had two barrels of molasses sitting under a tree and our corn and everything gathered in, and they were picking cotton. I

set the house afire. I was two years old. (laughter) Mother had brought my older sister a dress. We thought it was something fancy; it was made out of this eyelet material. She bought material and made her a dress and didn't make me one so I got mad and set the house on fire. Then my brother done grabbed the kerosene jug because he thought it was water and poured that on it. We had molasses even back then; we always, I reckon, had molasses setting under the trees.

U: Was there a cotton gin out there?

K: Yeah, they had to carry it to town on the wagon. Once in awhile we'd get a ride on a wagon. That was something great, when we'd get a ride to town on a wagon. Yeah, we'd usually have three or four or five bales of cotton. That was about all we kids could handle just properly. He'd haul it to the gin, and he'd sell it, and that's what we got our clothes with.

U: Was there ever a general store out in the Vinton area or the Barton area?

K: Let me see. I don't believe there was, not that I know of. I don't remember one, until after we moved away from out there. I stayed on that Phillips place. Mr. Phillips and his wife moved out there. Cedar Belle, I believe was her name. They moved in the house we lived in, and they built a store onto it and it burned down. That's the only store I ever heard of being out that way.

U: You mentioned that you went to school in Vinton.

K: Yes. I can't remember what grade I was in when I started there, but I stayed in Columbus until I was ten years old so I was bound to have gone to school there. I have a census record from down there, although it's a mile off. I left there when I was ten years old and I went to Vinton. I went two or three years because I didn't pass the first year since I had to stay home so much. I was ten when I started, and I was seventeen when I left. That'd be seven years in there that I had to go to Vinton School. We moved away from Columbus when I guess I was eight. We stayed down there a good while after Mother died, but not a year, maybe six or seven months or something like that. I went up there and started to Vinton. The first year I went to school there, I can't remember the teacher's name. But Pauline Kehl taught us about three years. They lived just out of West Point over there. She's Charlie Rhea's wife now. You might know Charlie Rhea if you've been around over there much. They live on the left-hand side of the road before you get out of town toward where we live.

U: Her last name was Kehl?

K: Kehl, yeah. That was Annie Kehl I was telling you about awhile ago, my husband's wife's sister. It was one of her daughters that taught us, I think for three years. She and I were about the same age. I

was seventeen and still going to school in the fourth and fifth grade. Then if you failed in one grade, they'd pass you on the others and let you go on, but if you failed both of them, you'd stay in the same grade. You could fail one grade, like arithmetic. I failed arithmetic and they kept me in the fifth grade in arithmetic, and I was in the sixth grade. I went up until March, before I was seventeen in May. I was still in the fifth and sixth grade.

U: Do you remember what that school looked like?

K: Yes, I can remember it very well. It was just one long building; I guess it would be about two rooms long. It had a platform thing like a pulpit where a preacher preaches, and the teacher stayed up there with a big blackboard behind her. It had a big potbelly stove setting way out in the middle of the school. I remember very well helping to keep that thing going. It had two doors on the front of it where we went in, and it had one door going out the back to the outhouse. As best I can remember, it wasn't nothing inside. It seems to me like you could see the rafters up above; it didn't have no ceiling.

U: Did it have benches or desks?

K: We had desks. I can't remember where they got them. They told me where they got them--from some school somewhere. They went out of business or something and the bought them. But they were desks, just a little old low desk like that. I can remember the school very well. It was right on the side of the road, close to the road, and there were big post oak trees all the way down the length of the school, great big ones. It was on a red clay hill.

U: Were there ever any houses close to that school?

K: Yes, right down about. . . . Well, you saw the store down here when you passed it, didn't you?

U: Yes.

K: It's a little further, maybe twice as far as from here to the store, on north of the school. There was a house up there, on the other side of the road. That's where, I believe, the Taylors lived. I don't know their first names. I don't remember. They had twin girls; I can remember that. I cannot remember their first name.

U: Was there anybody that lived the other direction?

K: Yes, there was a house back about the same distance back the other way going on down toward the graveyard, toward where the Watsons lived. There was a house about the same distance back that way. I can't remember who lived in it, but I know the lady was a big fat lady. She kept the babies for me while I went to school. I'd get up there about ten o'clock, and she'd keep them until I got out of school. It was a two-room house. Well, the school was sitting east and west, and the house was sitting north and south.

U: So the house faced the road?

K: It faced the road, yeah, and the school faced the road. The school was made long, like two rooms long, but it was just one room. Then about two miles on down was the cemetery, and the Watsons and the Kellers lived there. Then I can't remember anybody else living on it. I don't think there was anybody else living on that road from there on down to our house.

U: Was there ever a house on the other side of the road from the school?

K: Not when we were going to school, there wasn't. It was only that one, and the school was sitting this way, and the road went along in front of it. Way up the hill, right straight on west, there was a house. I can't remember the people's names. My daughter told me Thompson. I couldn't even remember that. I can't remember their first names.

U: Was there ever a house across the road from the woman who took care of the kids while you went to school?

K: Not that I recall. No, I'm sure there wasn't because there was woods back out that way.

U: You have Thomas Keller's house on this map near the cemetery, but across the road.

K: Yes, it's a little bit on the way down toward where we lived. Well, his house is just, I'd say, right even with this end of the cemetery, across the road. The cemetery went back this way, and Miss Lucy's house was a little bit further down from the cemetery. Her's was about the length of this trailer, I guess, further south of the cemetery. Then I don't recall any other houses. I can remember Miss Lucy and Julian and Thomas. There was more than that of the Watsons, but I can't remember them.

U: Do you remember what Watson's house used to look like?

K: I don't know. He didn't live out there. This crippled boy, Julian, who was afflicted or something, was Thomas's brother.

U: Thomas Watson?

K: Yeah.

U: What about Thomas Keller, the Keller that lives up there?

K: Oh, the Keller, that was Nancy Keller.

U: Do you remember what the house that she lived in looked like?

K: Yes, it was two rooms, just like the schoolhouse. Of course, it had a partition in it, but it was built just like a shotgun house, as they call it. It was two rooms and a little kitchen on the side.

U: Which way did it face?

K: From the road it faced that way. It would be west, I believe.

U: It didn't run with the road; it ran the other direction?

K: That's right. If the road is here, it ran out that way.

U: Okay, it doesn't run the same direction that the road runs.

K: No, the end of it faces the road. It had a porch on the side toward Miss Lucy's. I believe the kitchen was made out on the side toward Miss Lucy's, too. It was a two-room house. Mary Keller lived there first, and then Nancy married a Butts. He died and she married a Keller, and then she moved over there in the same house where her sister Mary used to live.

U: Was her sister Mary married when she lived there?

K: I don't believe she was. I think she was still a Keller when she lived there. I can't remember that. It's confusing trying to remember things and I can't. If I was by myself now, I could remember a whole lot of things that I can't think of with somebody around. I believe she was single when she lived there. It seems like she lived there to help Miss Lucy out or something. Miss Lucy was real old when we were kids. It seems to me like they moved her in there to help out Miss Lucy or something. It was after she lived there that Nancy lived there, I think. I think Nancy married her brother. I believe that it was after she lived there that Nancy moved in there; I'm not sure.

When Nancy married Mr. Butts, she lived in a little old house back across from the Uithoven place. It was like the one on the hill that had been a nice house. It had that plaster inside and had those strips behind it. We used to go there and stay all night long and square dance.

U: Where was that from the Uithoven house?

K: The Uithoven house, from the Phillip's place, is about three-quarters of a mile. The Phillips place is on the right going out, and the Uithoven place was on the left, about three-quarters of a mile further. At the time we lived there, there was a gate because there was a pasture and a fence. There was a gate that was right at the top of the hill. You turn off that and go back out there about, I'd say, a quarter of a mile off of the road that goes to the ferry. They still own the land back over in there. My sister saw the boys here not long ago, and she said they still own that land. It's about a quarter of a mile off the road. When you leave the Phillips place, you kind of go down a hill and when you go up the next hill, up at the top of it, right on the left, is where the gate was. The road to the house went this way and turned like that back down to the house. You could see it from the road, but it's about a quarter of a mile back there, I guess.

- U: Okay. Now that we've gotten to the Uithoven house, if we were going to the Whaley Hill house, would we keep going down toward the river from there?
- K: Yeah. We had a path. It was just about twice as far as from here to the store down there, maybe a little further than that, about a quarter of a mile. We had a path that we could leave the Uithoven house on and just walk down a little hollow right up to the house, when we were children.
- U: So it's the first ridge?
- K: Yeah, from the Uithoven place. It's down a hill; I don't remember whether it is on the road. I think it's all the way down the hill, maybe to the foot of the hill. You'd go down a little hollow and then up on this hill was the Uithoven house. Then go down another hollow and up a hill, and there was the old house we lived in. When we were children, we lived there.
- U: If we were at the Uithoven house again, which way would we go to this house that Nancy lived in after she was first married?
- K: That's up there by the graveyard. Oh, you mean the one she used to live in?
- U: The one she used to live in.
- K: Oh, that's way back off of the road; you wouldn't even see that at all. It's way back off of the road. From Uithoven's it's on back over toward West Point. It's pretty level to just before you get to the house, and then there is a hill that the house is sitting on. The old Whaley house is over here and the Uithoven's is here, and then this house is back over here. It's pretty level until you get nearly to it. You go up a little hill angling out from the road. It's not even on the road.
- U: What did that house look like?
- K: Yes, it was another shotgun house as they called them back then. The one we lived in was the only decent house around there except for the Uithoven's. All those old houses were just shotgun houses, and our's had a hall in it. The Uithovens had a pretty nice house. It was just an old shotgun house, but it had plaster and stuff inside of it. You could tell that the people weren't too bad off that had lived there because back then that was fancy.
- U: Were there ever any big trees or crepe myrtle around that house that Nancy lived in?
- K: Yeah, there was a huge water oak. I don't know if it was evergreen or not, but there was a water oak that grewed at the northeast corner. Then there was a row of crepe myrtle that come down from that tree, down past the house, way out front. You had to come

around the end of that crepe myrtle row to get into the house. I remember it was kind of in a field. It used to be you'd see junberries or blackberries, and we used to get out there and pick berries until it was a sight.

U: Was there a chimney with that house?

K: Yeah, just one chimney with it. It was a big old fireplace; it wasn't a little fireplace like most of them. It was a huge fireplace.

U: Whose house was that originally?

K: It belonged to the Uithoven place. This house was built over there, and I don't know who lived in it back when it was built, but it belonged to Doctor Uithoven.

U: Did you ever know anybody that lived there besides Nancy?

K: No, I never did.

U: Was she an Uithoven?

K: No, she was a Butts at that time; she married a Butts.

U: What was her maiden name?

K: Uithoven. She married a Butts, Joe Butts. I think, if I'm not wrong, they moved up into the house where Frances³ lived across from the graveyard. I know Nancy was up there. I can't remember if that was after Joe died or before. Joe was a pretty old man when we were just young kids. It may have been after he died, but I know Nancy lived up there. My son went through there one time and he stopped and talked to her. I haven't been up there in years and years and years. I'd like to go back through there, but I don't drive so I don't have no way to go.

U: Do you remember any kind of flowers or things like crepe myrtle around the Whaley Hill house?

K: No, there wasn't any around, not even any big trees. There was a bunch of cedar trees off to the right where you started down the hill. It was a bunch of cedar trees back out there because somebody ran a car into them. They let a car get away one day. All down that hill, if I remember right, there was a bunch of cedars. I don't remember any flowers. Back then, we didn't have anything but zinnias; that's all we knew. Old maids, I believe, they called them back then. That's the only kind of flowers I remember seeing and crepe myrtle. They had a lot of crepe myrtle. Outside of that, I don't remember any flowers.

³Probably Mary Keller.

U: You mentioned that your father had remarried.

K: Yes, he remarried. He married Mrs. Uithoven's sister. That was when I was about fifteen years old. He married her and they didn't live together long because the kids and her didn't get along. She was a huge woman; she was a big fat woman. I'm little to the size of her. She couldn't work. She'd go to the cotton patch, and Papa expected her to pick cotton just like we did, I reckon. The last picking, she'd take her a milk stool out there, and she'd sit down and make us pull up the cotton stalks and carry them to her and let her pick the cotton off of them, so she'd have cotton. (laughter)

U: What was her name?

K: Her name was Liddie.

U: Do you know what her last name was?

K: She was an Uithoven until she married Papa, and then she was a Harris.

U: She was an Uithoven, but she was Mrs. Uithoven's sister?

K: No, she wasn't an Uithoven. She was Mrs. Uithoven's sister. You're right. I don't remember her maiden name.

U: Have you ever heard of anyone whose last name was Beard?

K: Beard, that's it. (laughter) Liddie Beard, sure is.

U: You told me you got married when you were seventeen. Who did you marry?

K: Between sixteen and seventeen. Barney Cogsdell. He was Cogdell at that time. I told you the name was changed. His son Allen changed the name after he got grown and put the "s" in and made it Cogsdell. All the old tombs have Cogdell on them. I think they came here from Germany. Best as I can remember, it was Cogdell. Then Allen changed it and put that "s" in there. We went over to the cemetery over at the airport at Columbus. There's a cemetery right out in the middle of the airport. Cogdell's and Dean's were married; they were blood related, and they were buried out there, Cogdells. My son's been doing a lot of genealogy work, and he's been everywhere and knows all about them from way back yonder.

U: You told me that your husband's name was Barney Cogsdell. Were you his first wife?

K: No, he married Miss Annie Kehl's sister the first time and he had these two children, Hattie and Allen. Allen's been dead for years, but Hattie, as you know, is still alive. She's getting old though. She's almost as old as I am.

U: Do you know what her name was?

K: No, I don't. I can't remember her name, but Annie Kehl was her sister. She's dead, I know, but that family still lives there. Just coming out of West Point, before you get out of town really, it's up on a hill, on the left-hand side of the road coming out of West Point. They still live there, I'm sure. They did not too many years ago. They had these two children, and his wife's sister died so he put Hattie somewhere. I don't know where. He kept Allen with him. That's the reason Hattie feels, like she does. That's all the kin people he had there in West Point to my knowledge, just the Kehls.

U: Have you ever heard of anyone named Charlie Kehl?

K: Yes, that was Mrs. Kehl's husband. There's a young Charlie, Jr.; that's probably who you are talking about. He married Mrs. Uithoven's daughter, Frances. He married Frances Uithoven. He lives on the left of the road, too, coming out. We're really cousins by marriage to Frances and Guise and Eldridge. That was the three children. Charlie Rhea, Jr.--I think he is a Jr. because I know his father was called Charlie, too--still lives there. I guess they're getting pretty old too, now. I used to see Guise once in awhile. He's married, but I don't know who he married, and Eldridge is married and moved to New York so I didn't know who he married. Frances still lives over there just coming out of West Point.

U: Your father ran the Barton ferry for awhile?

K: Yeah, he run both ferries for awhile, the Waverly and the Barton. Which did he run first? I believe it was Barton. I believe he run Barton ferry first. Then he left there for some reason or another and wound up down at Waverly. We run that ferry for awhile. I run that Barton ferry one whole year by myself.

U: Can you tell me what that was like?

K: (laughter) Yes, I remember very well what it was like. It had just a flat ferryboat, and you had a cable. You hold onto the cable and stand on the boat and pull that across with your hands; it's not fastened to the boat at all. I remember we used to charge a dime for putting across somebody riding a horse; a wagon was a quarter, and a car was a quarter.

One year, the water was up real high, and there was all kinds of drifts coming down. I had carried a white man and a black man across and put them out on the other side of the river, and when I started back, a big log came along and drifted upside of the boat. It was just more than I could hold. I couldn't swim a lick; I never did learn to swim. That thing come over that cable and up the river, and I couldn't swim a lick. The ferry, of course, went down the river and me up the river. It was just gone. It put me right over. I finished finally, though, got back to the boat somehow or another--with the help of the Lord, I guess. I got on there and floated on down the river on it for about a couple of miles, and it

went up against the bank in a curve in the river. I jumped out and run around a willow tree with the chain and stopped it just before it hit the trestle. The railroad went over at Waverly, but I was working at Barton. It wasn't a trestle. What was down there? A bridge, I guess. I don't remember what it was. Anyway, I jumped out and run around that tree with that chain and tied it before that boat could get far enough down to jerk it out of my hands, and that stopped the boat. I got a bunch of help, and we went down and got it two or three days later.

Nobody could come across till we got the boat back. That cable was tied on each side of the river, and it wasn't fastened to the boat at all. Papa could handle it pretty good, but I weighed ninety-eight pounds. You know about how big I was, and when that big log come up against that thing, I tried my best to pull it fast enough to get out of the way of it before it got there. I saw it coming, but I couldn't do it so it hit up against that boat. It looked like if it hadn't went over, it would have turned over and that log would have pushed that side under. Anyhow, it slung me about ten foot up above the cable. The boat was going down the river ninety miles a minute, but I got to that boat. (laughter) Even today I don't know how I did. That's the only problem I ever had with it, but I put a lot of people across there in a year's time.

U: Can you run that ferry even in high water?

K: Not if it is too high, because of those drifts coming down. That's what happened to me. Them people over there kept hollering that they just had to get across so I went over there and got them. No, they must have been on this side wanting to go across this way because I was coming back when this log hit me. They just had to get over there for something. I don't remember what it was. It was just a tree that washed up. It just hit right broadside against the boat. It was either let it go down or let that side of the boat go down. I held it just as long as I could; I can remember trying to catch it with my toes as I went over the rail. (laughter) It wasn't no use, and I just turned a complete flip and went up the river about ten feet, as best I remember it. But I caught that boat and got it to the bank a couple of miles down. You're talking about a job. We used mules and everything else. We had to pull that boat up, put a chain out and hook it to the mules, pull it up maybe two or three feet and come to a tree. You'd have to go around the tree. We had to unhook the mules, and tie the boat to the tree. After we could get the mules on the other side, we'd hook them back up. We like to never got back up there with it. It was mostly a bunch of kids.

U: Do you know who made that boat?

K: No, I don't; I know who's got it.

U: Oh, yeah?

K: Guise Uithoven has got it over at Columbus; he was going to make a

club out of it, floating it on the water, but he never did get to do it because his health got bad. It's still sitting at his house; it was two or three years ago. He got it out of there and hauled it over there and was going to make some kind of a lodge or something out of it to float on the river.

U: When you and your dad ran the ferry, did you have like a license for it or did the county run it?

K: Oh, you didn't have no licenses for it. You didn't have to have nothing like that. You'd just get somebody to stay there to put people across.

U: How did people on the other side get your attention?

K: They'd holler. You could hear them all over that bottom down there hollering. They'd holler till somebody answered them. Many times I've heard Papa from way up in the cotton patch up toward that house on the hill answer when somebody would holler. He'd tie his mules and go and put them across.

U: Do you know what your husband ever did for a living when he lived up there?

K: He was a supervisor over building bridges when he fell and got hurt. He hurt his head, and he lost his mind. He never did completely get over it. We had to put him down in Meridian. I wanted to keep him home, but the sheriff of West Point at that time. . . . I liked to have thought of his name, but I can't remember what his name was. He advised me not to do it. From the time when our third child. . . . Our third child was a boy, and that was his heart. He thought that was all the kid there was on the place. After he began to lose his mind, he began to not like him; he changed to one of the girls that he never petted much. I won't say he didn't care for her, but he never petted her much. He turned to my daughter over here, and he just didn't like Thomas no more. He had nothing to do with him. I would have to go to work. This was when I was working at West Point, and I'd have to leave him at the house with the kids. He got Thomas out there one time with that handle mill that I was telling you about, and if Lula hadn't been there, he would have beat him to death. I told the sheriff about it, and he kept after me for about a month before I ever give up to let him go.

After he began to get so bad, he'd stay at home. He'd go in the fall. . . . One time I particularly remember was in the fall when people had big turnip patches. Everybody had a turnip patch. He'd go to people's turnip patches and pick turnip greens. He'd pull them up by the armful. He'd bring them home and put them in the pot without ever washing them or cutting them or nothing. He'd just bring them home and poke them down in the pot and cook them. When I'd come in, he'd say, "Supper is ready." I tried to get around it by telling him I'd brought something to fix or something like that, but not to tell him I didn't want the turnip greens. In West Point,

they used to grow these old purple-hull beans that you grow on your porch. A lot of people had them, and he'd go to people's houses when they was gone from home, and pick them things off and bring them home, put them hull and all in the pot and cook them. The sheriff just finally told me if I wouldn't consent, they was going to have to do something about it because it was too dangerous leaving him there with the children. Me and him never got along really; we never did as long as we were married. After he begin to lose his mind, my word was law. Whatever I said, it had to be done. That's just how he changed. That boy that he thought so much of before and petted so much, he just changed about him altogether.

So we had to put him down in Meridian, and he stayed down there about a year, I guess, close to a year. I don't remember how long it was exactly. He finally died down there, and I believe until today that he didn't die--he was killed. Hattie told me after he was buried that there was a three-cornered dent in the back of his head, just like a two by four had hit him across the back of his head. He wouldn't have hardly fell; he had lost so much weight until he wasn't heavy or nothing. He wouldn't have mashed that dent in his head just falling. They kept him tied in a chair anyway; he couldn't have fell. I went down there twice. Every week that come--I was working--I sent him a box of candy and cookies and stuff that I knew he liked. About once a month, I'd send a suit of khaki clothes. That's what he wore. He never so far as I know, got one thing I sent down there to him.

The last time I went to see him, he had on some boy's overalls that come up to about here on him, and the bib of them down like this. Not long before I went down there, I had sent him a brand new suit of khaki clothes, and I asked him about it. Of course, he couldn't tell me. I asked him, "Where are your clothes that I sent?" He said, "I don't know." He said, "Hattie got them." I know Hattie hadn't been there. He was sitting in a rounded chair with arms here, but it didn't have no back to it. His arms were tied to the chair like this. He was sitting up there with shoes on and no socks and them overalls that come up to about here. That's just the way they done them down there.

We went through that hospital, and there wasn't a soul in the hospital; we went in there hunting somebody to find him. There wasn't a soul in there, just the people that was in the hospital. It was men and women, a man and a woman, a man and a woman, like that, just mixed all up together. All of them were bald-headed. You couldn't tell whether they were men or whether they were women. They cut all of their hair off. There was two people in that place that I know were dying, and the mess hall was way up on a hill from the hospital, farther than from here to that store down there, and they were all up there eating dinner. There was not a soul down there, and one person there--she was a woman; you could tell from the way she was talking--was just begging, "Somebody help me. Somebody help me." There was not a nurse nor a doctor or nothing in there.

I had to do something because the sheriff wouldn't let me keep him no longer; he first told me to put him in one room to sleep and put a lock between me and the kids and him. I had a latch on the door, but that don't mean nothing. He said he couldn't let me do it no longer, but I hated to send him down there because a friend of mine had went down there--he drank a lot and he'd go down there to get sober--and had told me a lot about what it was like. But I had to. I didn't give up, really and truly. Hattie is the one that had him put down there. She just told them that they couldn't have that no more, that he was going to kill every one of us. The sheriff said a person in that condition could change all at once, all the way around. They could be violent, or they could change and be gentle. He was just afraid he'd kill every one of us. So we sent him to Meridian, and he died down there; he's buried there in West Point.

U: Do you know where your husband was born?

K: In Germany, I think. I don't know whether he was born over there, or whether his daddy came before he was born, but he told me that they were from Germany. He said his daddy came over here from Germany.

U: Do you know where he grew up?

K: No, I really don't know. He wasn't one to talk about himself that much; I never did get much out of him. But he did tell me that his daddy came over here from Germany.

U: Where did you meet him?

K: Well, he came to my daddy's house and played cards with us a lot when we lived on the Phillips place. When I got ready. . . . I wouldn't have got married if it had not been for my stepmother. Me and her got into a fight one morning; she had the fire poker and I had the shovel. (laughter) I was nearly seventeen years old, and he was nearly as old as my daddy. He told me that he'd take me out of it, so I said, "Let's go." I couldn't get along with her. I don't know why, but none of us got along with her. She whipped me with a stick of stovewood, and then my brother got into it. We liked to have had a war there one day. I just decided to. . . . I wanted her to stay with him to take care of him, but I couldn't put up with it, so I just slipped off and left; I didn't tell nobody I was going. We went to Columbus and got married, and all we had was a featherbed. We didn't even have a pillow to sleep on. (laughter)

U: You mentioned that you went to square dances.

K: That was up when we lived on the Phillips place. That was up at the Uithovens. Nancy and Mr. Butts lived right across from the Uithovens. We'd go there and have square dances all night long. I know I never will forget that they had an old pet coon in the house, and you couldn't sit down without he was in men's shirt pockets. He was in pockets hunting something to eat. (laughter)

They had a great big old white cat, and that thing must have been that long. He would lay on the hearth like a cat does when you have a fire in the fireplace. We'd put nuts in that fire, in the hot embers on the edge of the fire, to roast them. That old coon would be watching that cat laying there, and he'd go up there and pick that cat's paw up and make it rake those nuts out of the fire. That's smart. He broke that cat from sleeping on that hearth. (laughter)

Then one night, we danced till daylight; we started home and got about halfway home and looked up, and our house was on fire. We got there, and it was snow on the ground; it was cold, oh Lord. We had to get up there and throw snow on there and put that out. It was just the shingles; it wasn't no ceiling up there, just the shingles afire. We got up on top of that house and threw snow on it, and put the fire out. It had caught right aside of the fireplace. Some sparks, I guess, went out.

That was a good life back then. It was a hard life, but I really enjoyed it. You getting to thinking back over. We didn't have nothing to be afraid of; we'd get out and walk in the woods for miles and miles. Every spring, we'd take to the woods and hunt honeysuckles. In the fall, we'd go for miles hunting hickory nuts and scaly barks and walnuts and stuff like that. There wasn't a thing to bother us, no snakes much. We played in the woods all of the time. We didn't play at the house.

U: Do you remember any of the callers at the square dances or who played music?

K: Well, my daddy picked the banjo, and Mr. Joe done the calling.

U: Mr. Joe?

K: Butts, Joe Butts. That was Nancy's husband. He done the calling, and I don't remember if there was somebody else that played something. It seems like there was a french harp. That's all the music we had; my daddy picked the banjo. All the dancing I ever done was in square dances out there. I never learned to dance nothing else.

U: Did they ever have them at anybody else's house?

K: No. I don't remember ever going anywhere but to Mr. Butts; that's the only place that I remember going to.

U: Do you know anyone named John Poss?

K: There was a Poss. Where did Mr. Poss fit in there at? I didn't know what his first name was. It seemed to me like he was an old man that lived by himself somewhere. Where did he live? I can't remember where he lived, but I remember Mr. Poss. He was an old man, and I remember that. He could have lived in that house, too, up near Miss Lucy's and Julian's, before Mary moved in there. He

could have lived in that house, but I remember that old man from somewhere.

U: Do you know what he did?

K: I don't know. He was too old to work; he couldn't have worked. He must have been retired or something. I remember him. He was an old man, and we used to see him on the way to school. He lived there, before Mary moved up there. Mr. Poss, I haven't thought of that man in years and years. I'm just not sure where he lived.

U: Do you remember a man named Frank Andrews?

K: No, they must have lived in West Point.

U: Do you know anyone whose last name is Perkins?

K: Mary Perkins.

U: Mary Perkins?

K: Yeah. I can't remember her husband's name, but her name was Mary. That's who she married. She was a Keller and married a Perkins. Nancy, I think, if I'm not wrong, was Mrs. Uithoven's daughter and she wasn't. Now, I told you I was all confused. (laughter)

U: Well, it sounds like it's a confusing family.

K: It is Mary Perkins; that's exactly who it was. She lived there in that house next to Miss Lucy's. Mary lived in there, but I can't remember. . . . I think her name was Keller when she lived there. It seems to me that she lived by herself, but I'm not sure.

U: Did you know anyone named Wilson?

K: Wilson, yeah. They lived up above Vinton on up the. . . . You went up that road past Vinton, and you turned to the right, and you go out across a field about, I'd say, two miles off the road after you pass Vinton School. You go on down that road, and there's a road turned off to the right. You go about two miles back in those woods there.

U: Toward the river?

K: Yeah, he shot himself, Mr. Wilson did. He had two girls and a boy. I can't remember their names now. They come to school with us when we were going there. He had two girls and a boy. Yeah, I remember Mr. Wilson. There was so many people I knew when I was up there that I've forgotten.

U: Do you remember what his first name was?

K: No, I don't. We called him Mr. Wilson. He had a wife, and I don't

remember her name. She was a heavyset woman. I remember that. They had two girls; they were the same age as me and my older sister. We buddied off and played in pairs; we didn't play together. They had one boy that was younger than the girl; I don't remember what his name was.

U: Did you ever know anyone whose name was Atkins?

K: The Atkins owned that place we lived on is all I ever knew.

U: Which place was that?

K: The Atkins place is before you get down to the ferry.

U: The Phillips place?

K: Phillip Atkins, that's what his name was. They called it the Phillips place. That is the Atkins place. I don't remember the people's name; I don't even remember who we paid rent to or how it was paid. I don't know whether they come and got it, or whether we went and paid it or what. Phillip Atkins, that's his name. It's called the Phillips place.

U: Did you ever know a man named Levi Hollins?

K: I don't believe I knew him.

U: Did you ever hear any stories about steamboats on the Tombigbee?

K: No.

U: Have you ever seen any?

K: No, I never heard nothing about on that river. It might have been something somewhere else. I don't think they ever run on the river; it's too shallow. There's places you can wade all the way across that river, up there around Barton and Waverly. No, I've never heard of any big boats going up there. I've never seen nothing but skiffs in that river and the ferryboats.

U: Did you ever hear of a place called the Cox place?

K: I don't believe so.

U: Did you ever know a family named Shirley?

K: I knew one family that lived in West Point named Shirley. He was supervisor, but what was his name? His last name was Shirley; he was supervisor when my husband got hurt on that bridge. He was building bridges coming out of West Point, going north, I guess. If I could think of Mr. Shirley's name. . . . He had a son named Charlie, but I can't remember his name. He was road supervisor.

U: You said you had a son named Thomas who was interested in genealogy.

K: Yes, he got plumb on back from when they came over here from. . . . They must have come across up there by Virginia somewhere. He got back to Virginia, way on back there.

U: What side of the family is he working on?

K: Cogsell, they were Cogsdells back then. He had a brother Jim Cogsdell who lived at Shuqualak, and he had a sister Mary that lived down there. . . . I don't remember who she. . . . There was Annie Bean. I know there was more than that of them, but I can't remember the names; I remember Jim and Annie, and Mary. Annie was Jim's wife, I think. Jim and Annie, I knew, but that's all I ever knew of. They lived down at Shuqualak, but of course, they're dead now. But Annie Bean still lives. . . . Mrs. Annie's daughter, Annie Bean--their last name was Bean and she just called her Annie Bean--still lives in Columbus, so Thomas said.

U: This Annie that lives in Columbus would be. . . ?

K: I don't know who she married; she was Annie Bean. She and Jim Bean were brother and sister, and Jim is buried out there at that cemetery I was telling you about at Columbus. I don't know whether she is. I don't think she is.

U: Do you know if anybody ever used to cut timber out in there for a living?

K: Not too much, because there wasn't that much big timber; there wasn't that much pine that I remember. I don't remember too much pine. They don't fool with sweet gum and stuff like that too much. I don't remember anybody cutting any timber there.

U: Do you know if any of the Cogsdell family is buried in the cemetery that is in Vinton?

K: No, they're not. They thought at one time that a great-uncle or something way back yonder was buried there, but they could find no tomb. They don't know if it really truly was or not.

U: You mentioned Miss Lucy, who took care of Julian Watson.

K: Yeah.

U: Do you know what her house looked like?

K: Yeah, it was a nice house. It was six rooms and a big porch that run out the ell to the kitchen and dining room. The big porch run out the length of the house, and it was not facing toward the road; it was facing back the other way. There must have been a road back there before. . . . The back of it was the road, toward the cemetery. The back of it was to the cemetery, and she had three bedrooms and a living room, and a little ell kitchen and dining room. It was nicely furnished; she had nice furniture in there. The

people must have been well-off that built it. I never did find out how she fitted in, but I kind of figured she might have been Julian's aunt or something and was taking care of him. She could have been a Watson; I don't know. I can remember her very well. She wore newspaper inside of her clothes, and when she'd walk, she'd just rattle. (laughter)

U: Newspaper?

K: Newspaper or some kind of paper. I don't know what it was. She wore newspaper inside of her clothes, and she drove an old horse and buggy. Her and Julian rode many miles in that horse and buggy. They had a buggy shed built out to the side end, kind of in back of the house a little bit. She'd get into that buggy and go to West Point and go everywhere with Julian. I don't know how she'd manage about taking care of him in a buggy, if he needed to go to the bathroom or something. But she would; she'd get in that buggy and go where she wanted to go.

U: On this map that you've done for me there is a family named Foote.

K: Yeah, that's a Mr. Foote. He was a real old man who lived going into West Point from where we lived. It was about a mile and a half from our house down to theirs. We lived thirteen miles out of town, and it was about a mile and a half from our house down to theirs. Georgia, that my daughter wrote on there, was a black woman who. . . . Crecy was the one that took care of the kids more than her, but she cleaned up my kitchen and churned and everything just for milk and butter for her own; I didn't pay her anything. She's a black woman, and she lived not too far from Mr. Foote. Elizabeth, my girl who lives over here, used to walk down there backwards and forwards. She kind of liked that girl. She was a grown girl, but she was a little off. She wasn't just like she ought to have been. She took a liking to Elizabeth, and Elizabeth used to walk down there by herself about a mile and a half down the road just to see her. Georgia lived before you got to their house, I believe. The only two black people that I knew up in there were Georgia and Crecy. I can't remember Crecy's husband's name, but I remember Georgia's husband's name was Tony.

U: I don't think I have any other questions right now. I'm sure I'll think of some more, and you'll probably think of some more.

K: Yes, I can't get it all together at once, but I'll lay awake half of the night thinking. I've learned so much that I had forgotten.

U: Well, I'd like to thank you very much for the part that we have done right now.

K: Well, I'm just happy, I wish I could do more.

U: This has been a great help. Thank you very much.

K: You're welcome.

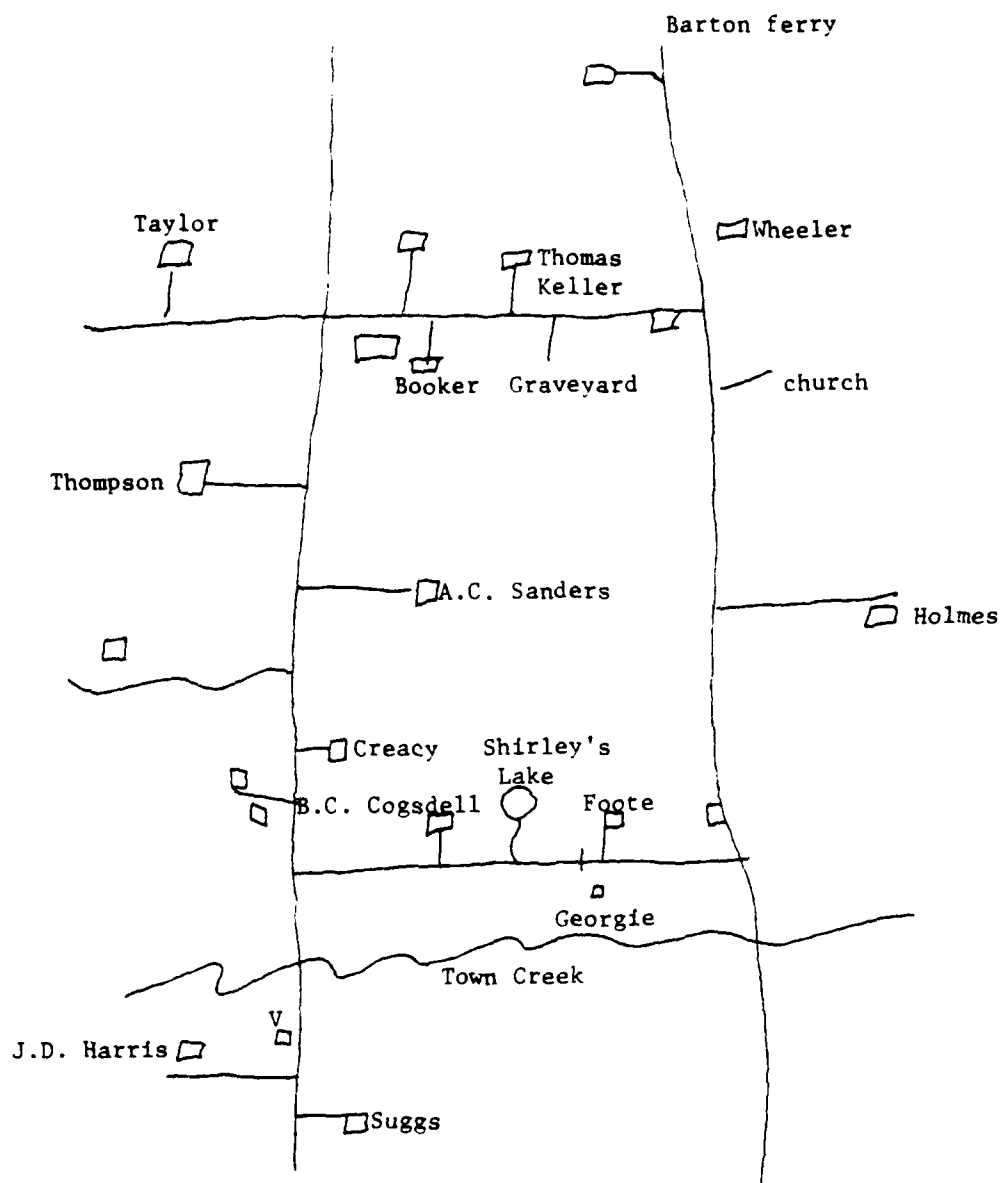


Figure 1. Sketch map of Vinton and Barton house locations. Drawing by Josie Kennedy. (original reduced by one-third)

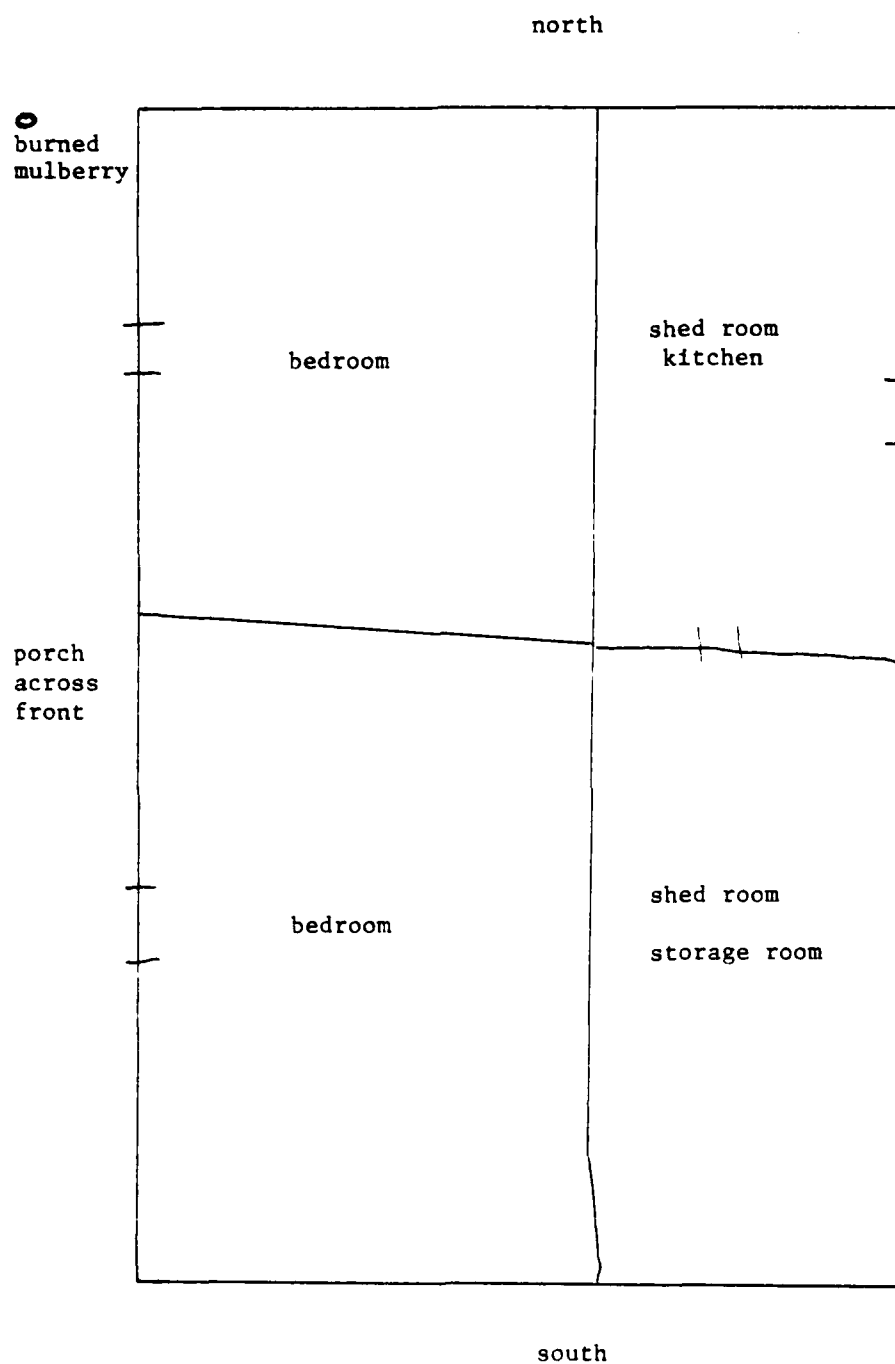


Figure 2. Floor plan of Harris ferry house. Drawing by Josie Kennedy.
(original reduced by one-third)

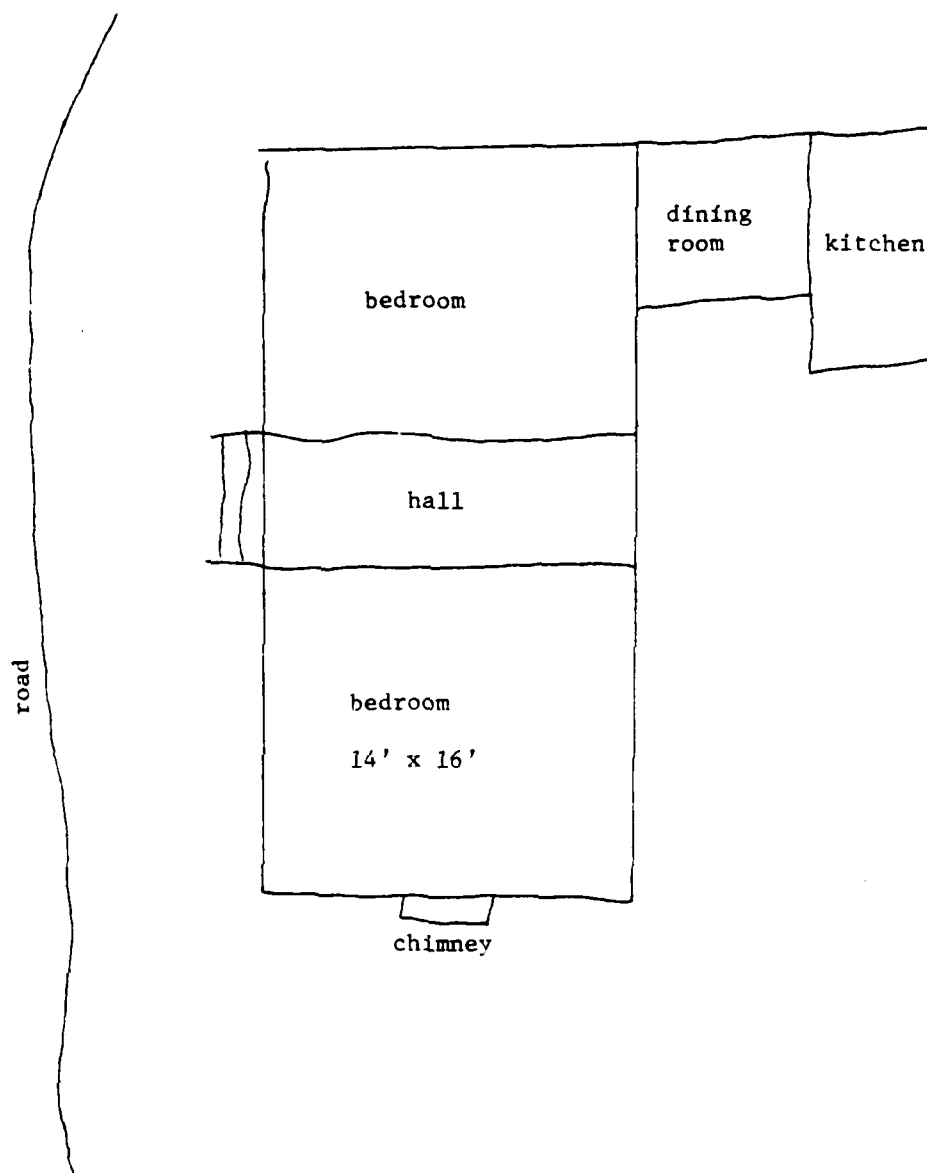


Figure 3. Floor plan of Atkins-Phillips house. Drawing by Josie Kennedy. (original reduced by one-third)

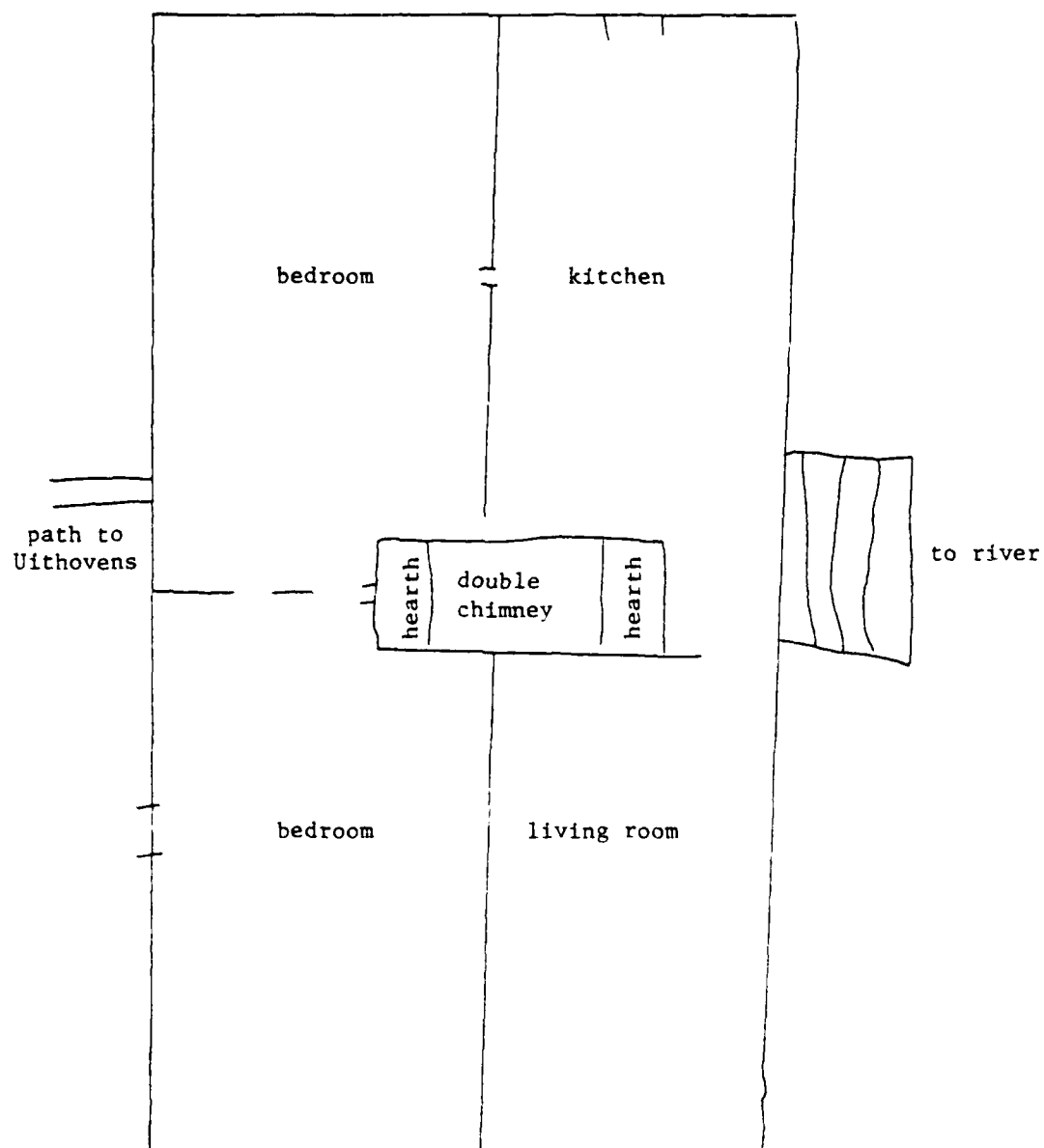


Figure 4. Floor plan of the High Water-Montgomery house. Drawing by Josie Kennedy. (original reduced by one-third)

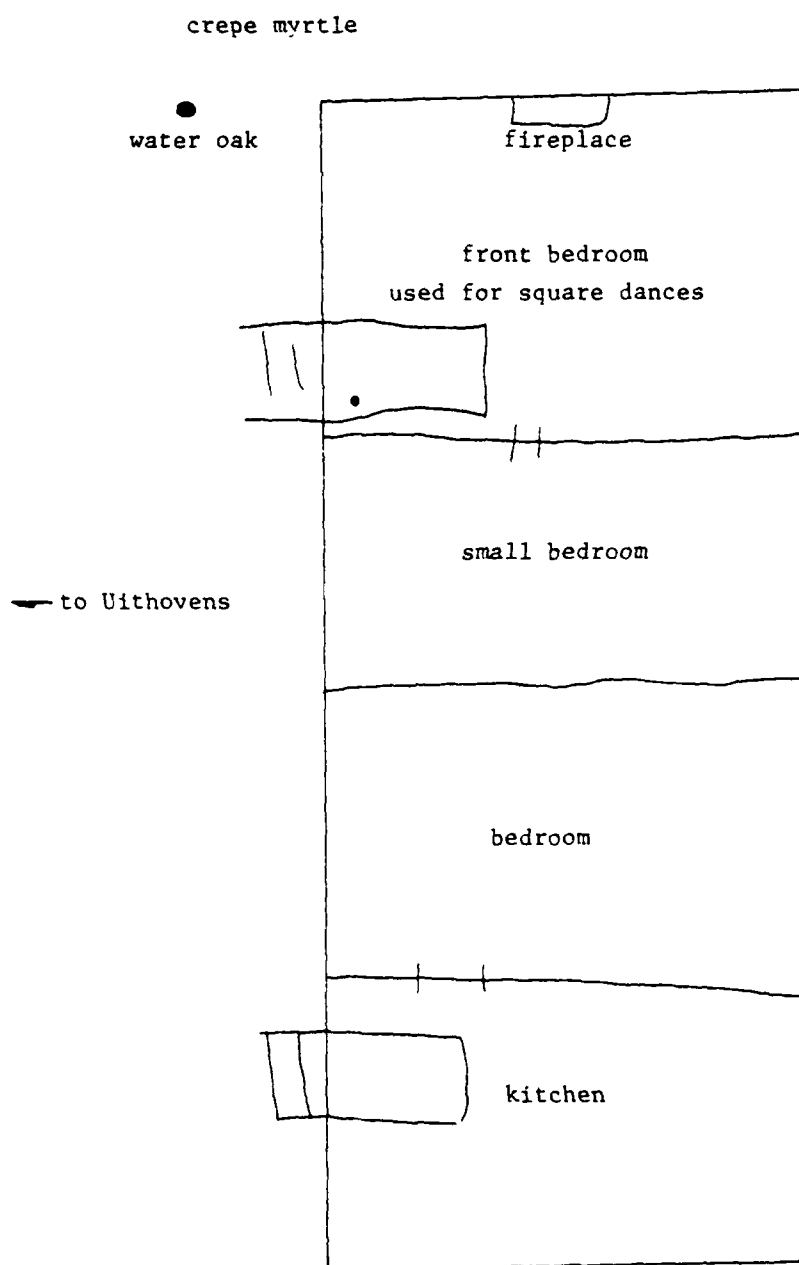


Figure 5. Floor plan of the Keller-Butts house. Drawing by Josie Kennedy. (original reduced by one-third)

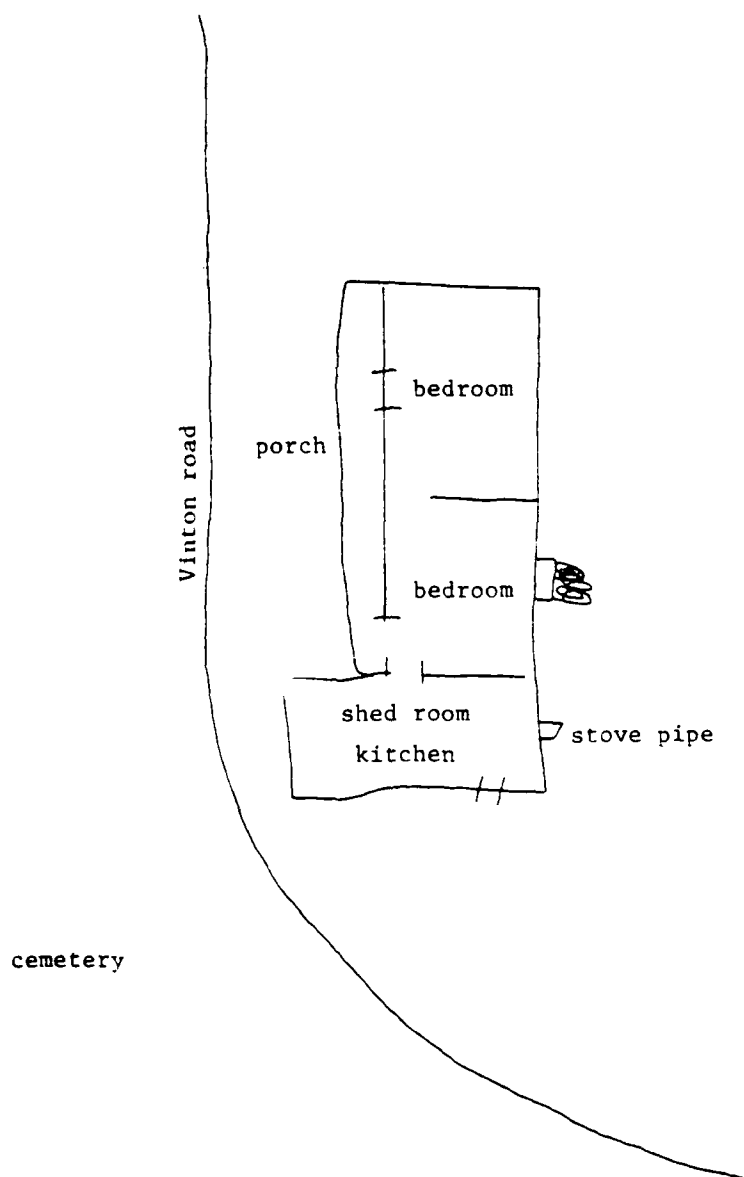


Figure 6. Floor plan of the Perkins house. (previously the Vinton general store) Drawing by Josie Kennedy. (original reduced by one-third)

to Mary Perkins

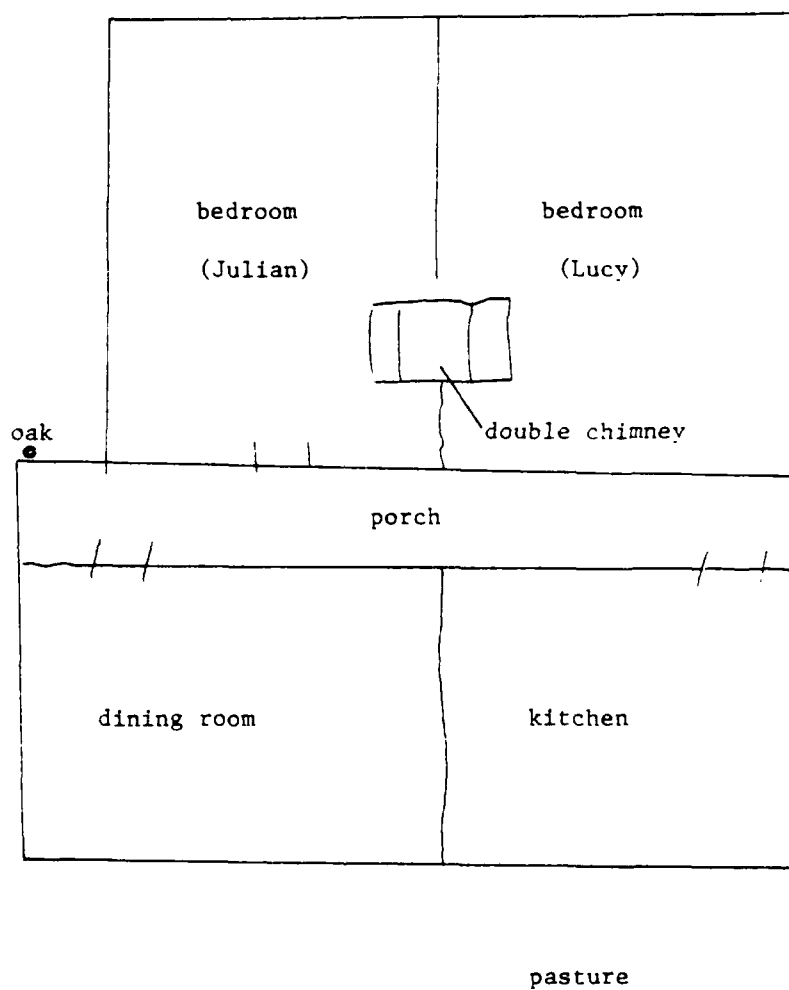


Figure 7. Floor plan of the Lucy Natcher house. (also known as Trotter or Watson house) Drawing by Josie Kennedy. (original reduced by one-third)

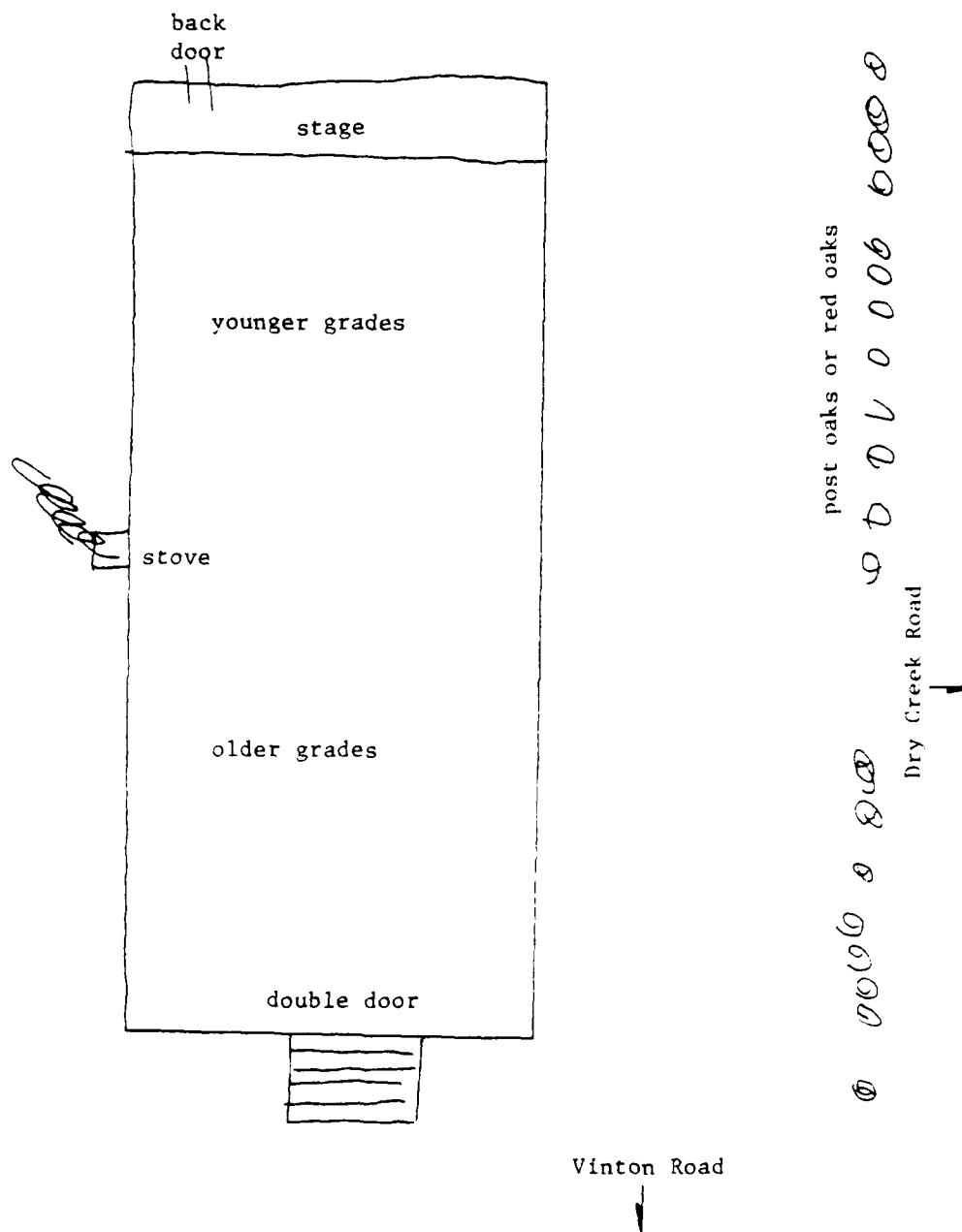


Figure 8. Floor plan of the Vinton School. Drawing by Josie Kennedy.
(original reduced by one-third)

THTP - Oral History Interview OH 133
Interviews with
Henry Mitchell

conducted and edited by
James M. McClurken



Henry Mitchell was born in the community of Vinton, Mississippi on January 24, 1910. He was raised by his great-grandparents, Henry and America Thomas, who were ex-slaves. As a child, Henry watched his great-grandfather work in his blacksmith shop and recalled the operations which took place there. When Henry Thomas died in 1921, our informant was left to support his great-grandmother by working in the fields. At night he would listen to her tell stories of the old days. This interview presents a participant's view of the sharecropping system, means of subsistence available in the early decades of this century, and genealogical information on the Thomas and Mitchell families.

These interviews with Mr. Mitchell were conducted in his home by James McClurken on March 27, 1980 and on April 10, 1980.

JM: This is an interview with Mr. Henry Mitchell for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by James M. McClurken. Mr. Mitchell's address is Route 2, Box 214, West Point, Mississippi 39773. The date is March 27, 1980. Mr. Mitchell's telephone number is 494-4878. The interview is taking place in his home.

Mr. Mitchell, I'd like to start by asking you a little bit about yourself. When were you born?

HM: I was born January 24, 1910.

JM: Where were you born?

HM: I was born right here in this area, over on the Barton Ferry Road.

JM: Were you born north of the Barton Ferry Road?

HM: That's right.

JM: Can you tell me a little more specifically where you were born? Where your house was?

HM: My house was right north of London Chapel.

JM: Was your house on the old Vinton Road?

HM: It was between the old Vinton Road and the Barton Ferry Road. See, it wasn't up to the Vinton Road, and it wasn't right on the Barton Ferry Road.

JM: What side of the old Vinton Road was it on?

HM: It was on the west side of the Vinton Road and the north side of the Barton Ferry Road.

JM: How far in?

HM: It was, I reckon, about a quarter to a half mile from the Barton Ferry Road.

JM: What was your father's name?

HM: Jesse Crigler.

JM: And your mother's name?

HM: Bessie Mitchell.

JM: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

HM: I have one half-sister, living out there by Montpelier. I was

grown and had a family when I knew her. My brother left from around here in 1931. I haven't seen him since and don't know whether he's dead or alive.

JM: Were your parents from this area, too?

HM: Sure was. My dad was in East St. Louis. That is where he passed at. My mother left from around here and went to Memphis. That's where she passed at. My great-grandparents raised me. That is why I know a whole lot about this old-timey thing.

JM: Where were your great-grandparents from?

HM: When I knew anything, they were on the home over there, where I was born.

JM: Is that called the Town Creek community?

HM: The Town Creek community. I lived with them until they passed.

JM: What were their names?

HM: My great-grandmother was named America Thomas, and my great-grandfather was named Henry Thomas.

JM: The name Henry Thomas comes up quite often. What did he do for a living?

HM: He was a farmer, but he was the man that did the blacksmithing around through there.

JM: Did he have a shop of his own?

HM: A shop of his own.

JM: Did you go and work with him there?

HM: I'd be down there in the shop all the time when he'd be working. That's how I learned so much, just from looking at him.

JM: What can you tell me about your great-grandfather?

HM: Well, he was a lathing maker and a carpenter, too.

JM: How else did he make his living?

HM: Well, he farmed, made molasses, and carpentered. See, he planted the sorghum, and they raised it. They'd strip it off and bring it to the mill. A mill ground it up. They got the juice and had a pan that they put it on and cooked it.

JM: Did you have to help with the molasses making?

HM: I didn't have to help. Sometimes I'd be out there. See, I was quite small. I couldn't do anything but be in the way.

JM: Where was your great-grandfather's blacksmith shop?

HM: Now the shop I know about was there on his place. It was about a block in front of his house.

JM: Was his house on the Barton Ferry Road?

HM: That's it, off from the Barton Ferry Road.

JM: Is that road still there today?

HM: It is. They've got it blacktopped, now.

JM: Did he have to make a lot of things?

HM: I don't know whether he had to do it, but he was always out doing something.

JM: Did he make things like door hinges?

HM: If he did, I don't know anything about that. I think that he bought all of them. I don't know.

JM: What was his biggest chore?

HM: Sharpening plows, shoeing horses, and farming.

JM: How often would somebody bring their horse to him for shoes?

HM: Well, that would be pretty regular. He had his bellows, and he shod them pretty regular.

JM: Did he ever have to shoe oxen?

HM: I don't remember him doing them, but they had oxen. I don't remember him doing anything to them.

JM: Have you ever seen an ox shoe around his place?

HM: Never have.

JM: Did he have a blacksmith shop before the one that you can recall?

HM: They say that he had one, but I don't know anything about it.

JM: Were you too young?

HM: That's it.

JM: What did your great-grandmother do?

HM: Farmed, made soap, fished, and pieced quilts.

JM: Did she have any special patterns that she used?

HM: That's right. She knitted and had a spinning wheel. She'd knit socks, gloves, and things.

JM: Did you ever get to help her with any of that?

HM: I didn't help her. I just looked at her doing all of that.

JM: How did she spin?

HM: She had some cards, and she would card the cotton, put it in little rolls about like your finger, put it on the spinning wheel, pull it out and make thread out of it.

JM: Did she sit down when she was doing that, or did she have to stand up?

HM: She could sit down while she was knitting it, but when she was spinning it, she had to stand up. When she was spinning it and making thread, she had to stand up.

JM: Did she have to walk across the room with the thread?

HM: No, she was close. She had to walk like from here to that chair there, three feet. That is about the longest the thread was.

JM: Did she ever make your socks?

HM: Oh, yeah. She made me lots of socks. Them things were thick and warm.

JM: Did she color them?

HM: Oh, no. She never did color them; she'd let them stay white.

JM: Did she make the cloth out of cotton or out of wool?

HM: She made it out of cotton.

JM: How did she make soap?

HM: Well, at that time, they didn't buy their lye. They made it in a thing that they called a lye hopper. They put the ashes up in it, poured water in them, and it dripped down.

JM: What is a lye hopper?

HM: A lye hopper is a thing that holds the ashes.

JM: What did it look like?

HM: It would be made out of wood, keen at the bottom and wide at the top. They'd fill it up with ashes and pour water over them. When the water came down through the ashes and dripped down, it would be

red. It would be strong. It would burn your tongue. That's what you call lye.

JM: What kind of wood did they use to make it?

HM: She just used ashes from the fire. See, they'd burn oak wood, hickory wood, just any kind of wood.

JM: Was it always a hardwood?

HM: That's it.

JM: What else did she have to do to make soap?

HM: Well, she had to put grease with it.

JM: What kind of grease did she use?

HM: Sometimes it would be lard, just hog meat grease. You'd have so much of it. Folks killed hogs, the fat gets rank, and they'd make soap out of it.

JM: Did she have a smokehouse there?

HM: Sure did.

JM: What was the smokehouse made of?

HM: I think that the smokehouse was made out of logs.

JM: What kind of roof did it have?

HM: Boards.

JM: How long was the building?

HM: Oh, it was about 11'x 12'x 10'.

JM: What did the inside look like?

HM: It had a ground dirt floor on the inside. They had daubed mud between the logs. That way no air or anything could get in there. They didn't nail any planks over them, just daubed them with mud. It would be warm in there.

JM: Did they build the floor up?

HM: Oh, yeah. They built the floor up high and the water would go around it.

JM: How high would they build that?

HM: It would be built up, I reckon, about eight inches . . . about six inches off of the level.

JM: Did it have any windows in it?

HM: Oh, yeah. It had windows in it, but they were shuttered, they weren't glass.

JM: Did they have a box in there for salt?

HM: Yeah, they had what they called the "meat box." They had it in there. When they killed the hogs, they'd salt them down in the big box.

JM: How did they do that?

HM: They'd just kill the hogs, cut them up, carry them in there, put every piece in the salt, rub it good with salt, and cover it with salt. Then when it had stayed down there for six weeks, they'd take it up, wash it, hang it up, and smoke it with hickory bark.

JM: How did they smoke it?

HM: They'd put chips of the bark or something in a bucket. They sat the piece of meat right over the bucket, put fire in it, then the smoke would just come up from it.

JM: What kind of wood did you use for smoking?

HM: Well, they'd just get their chips. It would be oak and hickory and all such as that, chips and bark.

JM: Did those smokehouses ever burn down?

HM: They never did let a fire start; it just smoked. See, they didn't smoke it when they would be gone. They smoked it when you would be around, so if it happened to blaze up, you would be there to see it.

JM: Did your great-grandmother use the smokehouse to store fruit or anything that had been canned?

HM: Yes, fruit would be in there, but fruit wouldn't hardly be in there when they'd be smoking meat.

JM: Would it wreck it?

HM: That's it.

JM: How far was the smokehouse away from the main house?

HM: Oh, it wasn't nowhere, just a step or two.

JM: What was your house like?

HM: The house wasn't like this. It was built out of plank. We didn't have sheetrock, didn't know anything about sheetrock, then.

JM: Did it have two rooms or more?

HM: It had two rooms, four rooms with the kitchen and the dining room. It had a hall in the middle. The hallway was closed in. On a lot of the houses the hallway would be open, but ours was closed in.

JM: Have you ever heard the term "dogtrot" house?

HM: No, I never heard it.

JM: Did you have fireplaces?

HM: We had two fireplaces. There was a fireplace in each room, one at this end and one at that end.

JM: You must have been able to keep the house fairly warm.

HM: Oh, yeah. You make a fire, and it would sure keep you warm. When I was a little boy coming on, they kept a fire all night. When they woke up, they put wood on the fire, and it would be warm all night.

JM: Did your great-grandmother cook on the fireplace?

HM: Lots of times. She'd cook ashcakes. That's bread. They called it ashcakes, corn bread.

JM: How did she cook ashcakes?

HM: They make it up just like you do in the oven. Sometimes she would pull the ashes back, put a big collard leaf down there, put the dough down on it, put another collard leaf on top of the dough, and then put them ashes over it. When it gets done, you take it and wash it off, take some water and wash it off. It would be good. It would be home-ground meal. It would be sweet.

JM: Did she make her own meal?

HM: They had a mill out there. She didn't own it; somebody else owned it. My great-grandparents kept corn on the farm, and they would grind their own meal.

JM: Where was the mill?

HM: Well, Wash Davis had one. They went there half of the time. Mr. Bradley's mill was up there in the hills near Strongs.

JM: Was there ever one at Vinton?

HM: There might have been, but I can't remember it. It seems like I heard them say that there was one, but I don't know.

JM: Can you tell me a little bit more about your great-grandfather's blacksmith shop and the tools that he kept?

HM: He had lots of tools. He had just all the kinds of tools that you could imagine.

JM: Did he have a big forge?

HM: Well, the thing he had wasn't no forge. They called it a bellows. You see, it had a handle that you'd raise up and bring down. It wasn't like these forges that you carry. It had a big old handle. You'd bring it down. It would mash together, like these coggins, but it was a bellows. They would go together like the coggins do. Everytime you pulled the handle down, it would shoot the air out.

JM: What did he build his fire in?

HM: He built a little place where the air would come in there. He built it up about so high and had it fixed where he had his fire. He'd get the fire started, and then use those bellows to make the coals burn.

JM: Was it about two feet tall?

HM: Just about two feet tall, I reckon, and it was about four feet wide. It had a little gap down in it, you know, where the ashes would go down. Then you could clean them out and everything.

JM: How many horses would he take care of a day?

HM: He owned four head of stock.

JM: Did the neighbors bring their animals there to have them shod?

HM: They sure would. They would bring them there sometimes.

JM: How many animals would he handle a day?

HM: He wouldn't be at it all day. Maybe he would shoe a couple of them, sometimes more, and he'd quit.

JM: You did get to see him shoe some?

HM: I got to see him. Now, he would sharpen plows more than he would shoe horses, because shoeing horses is an experience that is hard on your back.

JM: How often would the plows be dulled?

HM: They didn't get dull too often unless you used them in new ground, hitting stumps and things with them. When you hit those stumps and things, they would get dull. They would bring them, and he would put them in the fire and beat them out for them. Beating them out, that would sharpen them.

JM: Did the points come off the blades?

HM: The points would come off the busters. Well, later he had to put another point on it for them.

JM: Do you remember seeing any wooden plows out there when you were a boy?

HM: I remember seeing one or two wooden plows since I got grown.

JM: People still used them?

HM: That's it. I've seen one or two wooden plows since I got grown. You could put sweeps on them. They didn't have but one piece of iron in them. That was the big bolt what they put through the sweep to hold it together.

JM: Was that all that held them?

HM: That was all the iron that was in it. You see, where the handles would come together. . . . What went through that was wood. To hold it together where the mules pull was an iron pin about so long, going through. That would hold the plow together.

JM: How many mules would it take to pull one of those plows?

HM: They'd just use one mule to a little plow like that, but these other plows would take two mules to it.

JM: Did they have two bottoms on the plows for two mules?

HM: Just one. It was a pretty good-sized plow.

JM: How big of a furrow would it make?

HM: Both of these would throw a big furrow. The turning plow would, too.

JM: When they were planting, did they have different widths for different kinds of crops?

HM: That's it. They had different widths. Sometimes they would have the rows about like this. (gestures)

JM: About a foot and a half?

HM: That's it. Then, sometimes they would have great big rows, according to what they wanted to put in there.

JM: What would the big rows be for?

HM: Well, they'd have watermelon patches, corn rows, cotton rows. Some people like large rows; some like small rows.

JM: Is there a difference between what the furrow would be like on sandy land and what it would be like on prairie.

HM: Well, it was a different furrow because you would plow more deep in the blackland than you would in the sandy land.

JM: Would it be much harder to plow?

HM: That's it.

JM: What did you do on your days off?

HM: When I was growing up?

JM: Yes, when you were young.

HM: I did love to play, but there wasn't anybody but me and my grandmother (see addendum). I had to work all the time that it wasn't raining. I couldn't work then, you see. I'd go to school. That was when I got a little learning. I'd go to school on rainy days, if it was schooltime.

JM: What school?

HM: Well, I went to Town Creek and Concob.

JM: Did you go to both schools?

HM: Well, you see, when they moved it from Town Creek, we went up to Concob.

JM: When did they move it?

HM: They moved it when I was quite young, then they brought it back. They fill it up and brought it back to Town Creek. I went to Town Creek until I was sixteen or seventeen years old. See, I didn't get to go to school regular. I just went when I could. I finished the eighth grade after I came back out of the army in 1946.

JM: That was quite a thing back then. Not many people did that.

HM: Yeah, ain't many around.

JM: What kind of chores did you have to help your grandmother with?

HM: Well, they were all my chores. There was nobody but her and me farming, just trying to make a living. That was all that was going then. I started day working in the hay for thirty cents a day, left thirty cents and went to forty cents.

JM: What year was that in?

HM: That was way back yonder when I was working for thirty cents. I'd say I was about twelve years old then.

JM: You were doing day labor that early?

HM: Oh, yeah. You see, my granddad died when I was eleven years old. I've been a man taking care of house ever since. I reckon, I did some of might near every kind of work, and worked some everywhere. I was always just barely living. When they got to paying a little something, I was too old to make it. See, they won't let you get on these good jobs making a whole lot of money at my age.

JM: It seems unfair after all of the hours that you put in, doesn't it?

HM: Man, I declare it do.

JM: What did you do before you were twelve and went out for day labor? What kind of games did you play?

HM: There wasn't hardly any game that I could play. You see, old people didn't let you. You played by yourself. You didn't go visiting, doing this and doing that, back then like children do now. You'd just stay at home and play.

JM: Did they tell you stories at night, after you'd come in the house?

HM: No. You ate supper, washed your feet and things, and went to bed.

JM: Did you have a tub in the house to wash up in?

HM: No, you could bring a tub in, a foot tub or something to wash your feet . . . these big things that you sat up to use. That's what you used to take a bath in. There wasn't no such thing as a bathtub, at that time.

JM: Did you go down to the river for your bath every once in awhile?

HM: I'd get a chance to go down to the river every now and then. I learned to swim in the river.

JM: Where did you go?

HM: In the Tombigbee.

JM: Down by Barton's Ferry Road?

HM: It was way up along Vinton where I went across, you know. I had some nieghbors up there that went across and I went up to visit them a little. I went to swim down on the river. I'd swim in the river and in Dry Creek down there. After I learned how, I didn't care anything about swimming. I'd swim a little when I was in the army. You had to take up some kind of a trade there, you see, get some kind of exercise. I would choose swimming. I used to go out in the edges of the sea, in the bay in Japan. I was out there swimming once, and a wave carried me way out. I made it back, and I said, "Now, there ain't no sense in this, and I ain't got it." I didn't go back out there no more.

JM: Did you ever do any fishing or hunting?

HM: There's something now that I ain't never cared anything about, fishing and hunting. There are deer, and I could sit on my porch there and kill them at deer time, but I ain't never cared nothing for hunting and fishing. I have fished, now, but my grandmother made me go with her when I was a kid. After I was grown, I didn't care nothing about it.

JM: Did your grandmother used to go fishing?

HM: Oh, she'd go fishing. She'd catch them.

JM: Were they good?

HM: They were really good. I love them now, but not enough for me to fish and catch them.

JM: What did she cook on?

HM: She had one of these wood stoves; she had a big old wood stove.

JM: Do you remember the brand of the stove?

HM: All I know is that it was iron.

JM: Did it have a reservoir to heat water in?

HM: No, those stoves that had the reservoir were called ranger stoves. See, she didn't have a ranger stove in my time. She had, had one I heard my uncle say, but she didn't have one in my time.

JM: So your great-grandmother had raised two families.

HM: She raised my uncle, and she raised me. Then she raised his mama, her daughter, too.

JM: What was his mother's name?

HM: Violet Randle.

JM: How many children did she have?

HM: She just had two, him and my mother.

JM: What was your mother's name again?

HM: My mother's name was Bessie Mitchell.

JM: When did the mailman start coming to your house?

HM: Well, now I don't know. The first mailman that I can remember was riding in a buggy. His name was Charlie Kehl.

JM: Where did Charlie live? Was he one of your neighbors?

HM: He lived in town. His wife is still in West Point.

JM: Did you get any magazines or newspapers?

HM: I didn't take any when I was a boy. I took a few since I've been grown, but they've done stopped. They won't even bring papers out now; said that they can't get enough subscriptions.

JM: Did you ever see a newspaper when you were growing up out there, or was that a rare thing?

HM: Well, it was kind of rare to see a newspaper.

JM: What about a Sears & Roebuck catalog?

HM: Well, you'd see one of them now and then. They would send something to you if you were ordering something from them. I did a little ordering but not too much.

JM: What kind of things would you order?

HM: Well, I ordered suits of clothes from them.

JM: Did you ever order tools or anything like that?

JM: I never ordered tools. I'd always go to town, see some kind of tool I'd want, and buy it.

JM: Did many of your neighbors buy from the catalog, or did they just go into town?

HM: Lots of them would fool with the catalogs, but I didn't do too much of that.

JM: Did you go to town often?

HM: Oh, I went to town very often. With money and stuff so scarce, we might near had to go to town every Saturday. You weren't given but three dollars a week. If you worked from Monday morning to Friday night, you got those three dollars, went on into town, and bought your groceries.

JM: How did you get to town?

HM: Well, we had one mule. Sometimes I'd ride the mule; sometimes I would go with some of my neighbors.

JM: When you went with some of your neighbors, did you ride in a wagon?

HM: In a wagon.

JM: What town is this that we are talking about?

HM: West Point.

JM: Where did you shop in West Point?

HM: Oh, there were more stores around there than you see there now. There were a lot of stores downtown. See, they done closed them, tore a lot of them down. The biggest part of town now is out on the highway. There wasn't anything out on the highway then. Everything was right up there in the town.

JM: Were there any people out by your house who were musicians or singers?

HM: They would sing. . . . There was singing all around there, but they weren't singing songs like they sing now. They would sing these old Dr. Watt' hymns. Now they sing some of everything.

JM: Did you ever know a man named Summer Moore?

HM: Summer Moore. I sure knew him. I don't know where he moved from, but when he moved, he moved over to Vinton. I reckon that he came from town. I think that's where he moved from. He had a wife by the name of Mary Jane.

JM: Where did he live?

HM: He lived over there at Vinton, right in front of Peter Montgomery's house. He lived out on that path in front of Peter Montgomery's. He lived on the west side.

JM: He lived on the west side of the old Vinton Road?

HM: That's right.

JM: Was he directly across the road from Peter Montgomery's house?

HM: He sure was.

JM: Could you describe Summer's house for me?

HM: The house he lived in was a plank, but it had a open hall to it. Bill Moore later moved across the road and lived in this same house. Bill Moore and Summer Moore are distant kin.

JM: Did it have big rooms in it?

HM: It had two big rooms, one used for a kitchen and one for his living room.

JM: Did it have fireplaces?

HM: Had one fireplace.

JM: What end would that have been on?

HM: It would have been on the north end.

JM: Did it have glass in the windows?

HM: Shutters.

JM: Did it have a porch?

HM: No, just where the hall was open.

JM: Did it have a loft in it?

HM: No loft.

JM: Was it an old house?

HM: It was an old house; it was there when I was a little boy coming up, and he moved out there in it.

JM: Was there any house between Summer Moore's house and Preacher Shirley's house?

HM: There could have been before my time, but I don't know nothing about it.

JM: Did you ever see Preacher Shirley's house before he built his new one?

HM: Sure did, I spent nights and things up there with them. It was a log house.

JM: What did the house look like?

HM: When I was a little boy they built a plank house there and had a open hall between it.

JM: Did it have a log room on one side and a plank room on the other?

HM: Not after they built the new one. They had a log kitchen when the log house was there. It was just a one-room log house with a log kitchen. The kitchen was off from the house. That was when I was real small, coming up.

JM: So that was probably a real old house?

HM: Yes, that's it. They tore it down after I was about ten or eleven years old. They built a plank house with a hallway in between the rooms, a room on each end.

JM: Did the log house have a fireplace in it, too?

HM: Uh-huh. The chimney was built out of sticks, crossway in there. They covered it with mud so the sticks wouldn't burn.

JM: Did they have a special name for that kind of chimney?

HM: I haven't heard about it.

JM: Did they outgrow their log house?

HM: That's it.

JM: Were there many one-room houses around here?

HM: No, but I ain't seen many of them.

JM: What did Summer Moore do for a living?

HM: He farmed. Watson was living at Strongs, but Summer was living on the Watson place, and he was farming for them.

JM: Yeah. What kind of things did he raise?

HM: Cotton and corn, peas, and potatoes.

JM: Did each family keep a separate garden when they were working on somebody else's place?

HM: Oh, yes, each family had a separate garden. They didn't have gardens together.

JM: Was it mostly the women who raised the family's vegetables?

HM: Well, the men would get it fixed, break it up, help plant it, get it started off, and plow it when it need it. The women would do the chopping.

JM: What about the children?

HM: Didn't let the children in the garden because they would step on the stuff, cut it up.

JM: Did they put fences around their gardens?

HM: Oh, yeah, paling fences. They didn't have wire fences around gardens much. Paling around the garden, paling around the yard.

JM: Can you tell me what a paling fence is?

HM: A paling fence is something thin like a little old plank, but it's thinner than a plank. It would be about five foot high, and I reckon about four inches wide.

JM: How would they make these palings?

HM: They would have an iron froe. They would drive it in the log and drive them out. I don't know whether you've seen rived boards or not, they have brakes, and they rive them, make them thin.

JM: Were there men in the community who did that for a living?

HM: Oh, just any and everybody did it. If I wanted some palings, I'd go out and rive me some. If you wanted you some, you'd go out and rive you some, and the other fellow would go out and rive him some.

JM: What kind of wood did they use?

HM: Well, the biggest part of the time they use oak wood for that.

JM: Any special kind of oak?

HM: Some would use red oak. I ain't never seen no palings out of anything but oak.

JM: Can they use water oak as well as red oak?

HM: I don't think water-oak rives will split good. I don't know, it might.

JM: You mentioned that you had a board roof on your smokehouse.

HM: They would use cypress for board roofs. Some of them use oak but they usually used cypress boards when I was a boy coming up.

JM: How did they get a cypress log out of the swamps?

HM: An old mule would drag it out.

JM: Would they go in, cut it down, and just tie a rope to it?

HM: No, they didn't tie a rope to it. They'd go in, cut it down--you know, they'd been always logging--get those cant hooks and them tong things, hook them on there, and let the mules drag it out.

JM: Yeah.

HM: You see, they've got these skids. They carry this heavy skid down there, and the skid drags it out to the truck and everything. The skids just wind it on and drag it out.

JM: How long would it take you to fish a cypress log out after it was cut?

HM: Oh, it wouldn't take long.

JM: Aren't cypress trees usually growing in lowlands, in the bottoms?

HM: Lowlands, out in water. I've cut many a log down at Cooks Bottom, out in the water. That is up near the West Point gravel pit. We'd have to saw it off. It would fall in the lake. Then, the fellow came there, took his mules and things, and snaked it out.

JM: When did you stop using mules here?

HM: My last horse died last week. I just had them here for the farming. After I stopped farming, I just kept them.

JM: When did you stop farming?

HM: In 1955, that's when my wife died. I ain't done no farming since. See, I raised horses. I didn't want no mules. I just bought a horse, raised me two horses, and got rid of my mules. Me and this lady, Mary Mitchell, we've been married about seven years. My first wife passed.

JM: What was the difference between farming with a horse and a mule?

HM: It wasn't no difference; I just didn't like mules. A mule is more hardheaded than a horse is.

JM: Are they harder to get to work?

HM: Oh, they just don't want to mind you; they are hardheaded. Oh, they will work good if you get one that works good, but he's just hardheaded.

JM: Were there ever accidents with people using mules or horses?

HM: Sometimes if you mess around and get careless with them, they'd run off with you, get scared of something and run off. An old mule just dancing is just liable to kick you. You forget about him and he'll look back and kick you or something. I just always liked a horse.

JM: Did you and your grandmother have a mule or a horse back when you first started out?

HM: Oh, yes, she bought a mule when me and her first started. One mule, that's what I started out farming with.

JM: Where did you get your harness?

HM: Oh, we bought them. Well, no, I didn't buy them. I took leather . . . I'd get me a piece of this and a piece of that, and I'd make harnesses to put on my gear. We bought the hames, the traces, and the collars.

JM: Where did you get your buckles?

HM: When I'd see an old buckle on something, I'd just pick it up and bring it home. You usually could find a lot of stuff on the road. I'd just pick this up and say, "I can use this," pick it up and bring it home. When I could use it I used it, and when I couldn't use it I'd let it stay there. Well, by and by I'd need it.

JM: So, that's how you managed to get by?

HM: That's it.

JM: How did your grandmother preserve her food?

HM: Well, she would peel her pears, slice them, and she'd put them in a pan. If she wanted them real sweet, she put a layer of pears and a layer of sugar and let them soak at night. The next morning she would cook them off. You call them preserves, and when she cooked them off, put that sugar on them, they would be red.

JM: Did she put those in jars?

HM: Put them in jars. When she put up peaches, she wouldn't want them preserved. She just put a little sugar in them and cooked them.

JM: Did she ever dry food?

HM: Oh, yes. She dried apples, peaches, too.

JM: How did she dry apples?

HM: Well, you see, she would peel apples, slice them, have a board out in the sun, put them on there, and didn't let us touch them until they got dry. We would slice them thin.

JM: She wouldn't let you touch them, though?

HM: Oh, no.

JM: She was afraid you'd eat them all! (laughter)

HM: Oh, yeah! They would make the best fried pies, those dried apples. I'm crazy about fried pies today.

JM: Are there people who still make good ones?

HM: You have to buy your apples, though. You don't catch anybody drying apples now. Here the other week, me and my wife went to the grocery store. I saw some dried apples. I said, "You better get them dried apples there. I believe I want some fried pies." I didn't know she was going to cook the pies as quick as she did. We came on home. She was cooking, and she said she thought about them. When I come in from work she said, "Well, I happened to cook your pies. There they are. You better taste them now." I sat down there and ate up might near all the pies. (laughter)

JM: Sounds like it was good.

HM: It really was good. I just like fried pies.

JM: Did people go out in the woods and gather foods?

HM: Well, old scaly barks and walnuts, something like that.

JM: Did the kids sit around and crack them at night?

HM: They didn't do too much cracking at night. They'd do it just anytime they could, at night, through the day, or whenever they could, on rainy days. You could gather things called "quarter-hammers." I reckon they'd be about this big around, but they were all back out west of town. My grandmother lived out there.

JM: What's a quarter-hammer?

HM: They're great big things like . . . about that big. They were nice, but I've never seen any over in here.

JM: What about pecans?

HM: There were a lot of pecans around here, but there ain't many of them around through here now. People cut them down. There are a few trees around in here.

JM: Did you ever go looking for wild onions and things like that?

HM: I haven't but a lot of people do it. I don't care anything for wild onions. A lot of people go out and hunt them.

JM: Did you raise potatoes in your garden?

HM: Well, not lately I don't. I don't like them like I used to. When I get a taste for some of them, I just go to town, buy two or three, and then the taste is gone.

JM: Did your grandmother raise a lot of them?

HM: When I was farming, I used to raise everything that was eatable but since I quit farming, I don't care nothing for it. I raise water-melons, raise them to sell.

JM: I was wondering who treated people out there when they were sick?

HM: Well, the first doctor I went to was Dr. George Darracott. He was on the Vinton Road, but it was way up yonder. They called it the Darracott Road, way up in the hills. He was a country doctor but he'd treat people in town and everything. Then we'd go to town, to the doctors there. There used to be doctors out in the country.

JM: Did they come to your house when you were sick?

HM: They used to come to your house, but they won't now. They don't make house calls now, but they used to come to your house. I used to call the doctor right here to this house here from town. He used to come out here, but he won't come now. That was along in the 1950s and early 1960s.

JM: What kind of sickness did people seem to get a lot when you were a boy?

HM: The first sickness I remember having, they called it the "hen flew

in the window." It was the influenza, but they just said the hen flew in the window. You would be weak and sick.

JM: How did your grandmother treat you for that?

HM: Well, she had to give me some kind of tea for that. She didn't even carry me to a doctor, just used home remedies and I got alright.

JM: Do you know what kind of a tea it was?

HM: It would be a cow-pen tea, chicken-pen tea, all such as that. There's sage tea. Cow-pen tea is called cow-dung tea.

JM: Cow pen?

HM: You go out in these broom sages. . . . They call this sage tea. That stuff was good.

JM: What was sage tea used for?

HM: They'd give you sage tea according to what kind of sickness you had. I've heard her say that you take that sage grass, the water from that sage, and put it in a little baby's eye. It wouldn't be strong; it would help him. You don't hear tell of that now.

JM: What other kinds of cures did your grandmother use?

HM: She used Vicks salve, liniment and stuff, and rubbed me around.

JM: What kind?

HM: This Slone liniment; this white liniment.

JM: What did people do with the bottles after they were done with them?

HM: Just throw them away.

JM: Did they dig holes and bury them?

HM: No, they just threw them out. I don't know about them burying any bottles.

JM: Did she buy any elixir?

HM: Not that I know of.

JM: Do you remember an old store at Vinton?

HM: I never remember going to it. I just heard them talk about it.

JM: What did you hear them talk about?

HM: I heard them say that a lot of people used to stay around up there.

There was a store up there called the commissary. They'd go up there and get a little grocery and stuff from there. That old house I was telling you about, they say it used to be the store. I don't know, I told you that an old man lived in it.

JM: What was his name?

HM: I done kept on until I thought of his name. He was named Poss, and the next man I remember that went in there was Joe Harris.

JM: Did they live in the store after it closed?

HM: After it closed and everything. Wasn't nobody much around, then.

JM: Did you get to go in it when they lived there?

HM: I went there when Joe Harris was there. I just remember old man Poss. I don't know if I ever went there when he was there or not.

JM: Was the old post office still in there?

HM: I don't remember that. I heard them talking about it, but I don't remember that.

JM: I have to ask you about the location of that building. Do you know where the road cuts back to go to the cemetery?

HM: Sure do.

JM: Was this store just a little bit north of where that road runs into the old Vinton Road, or was it just right across from the cemetery?

HM: That old store wasn't quite in the road where you turn. I could say that it was right straight across from the cemetery, but you had to go up a little piece to turn in there. Where the road was running, you couldn't go out from the cemetery and come right straight on to it.

JM: So you had to come out the end of that road, go north a piece?

HM: That's it.

JM: So, the store wasn't directly between Mr. Watson's old house and the cemetery?

HM: That's it.

JM: In your time, how many rooms did that store have?

HM: I think there were two rooms there because it was an old log house. I think there were two rooms to it, or just one great big one. But, I think there was two.

JM: Where was the flue or the fireplace in that?

HM: Well, I don't know for certain, but I think it was on the east end of it. I ain't quite sure of it. I think there was a little old chimney on the east end, because that's the way it was sitting. It was on the east end I think.

JM: Was there a house no more than two hundred feet north from that store?

HM: There was one southeast of it, but I don't know of one to the north. There could have been.

JM: There's a road that runs back to the Watson house and then back to the river.

HM: Sure was.

JM: Were there any buildings along that road, besides the Watson house?

HM: Not as I know of.

JM: Were there any old houses south of that road and along the old Vinton Road?

HM: There were two houses that I can think of, the house where Summer Moore lived, and another one was around there where Warddell Moore's house is.

JM: Whose house was where Warddell Moore's house is?

HM: When I can remember, Bill Moore lived in it.

JM: What kind of a house was that?

HM: It was a little old shotgun plank house.

JM: Did it have two rooms or three?

HM: Living room and kitchen, that's it.

JM: Did it have windows?

HM: I think it had one shutter.

JM: Was it quite common for people not to have window glass back then?

HM: Yeah, it was quite common then.

JM: When did people start getting window glass out there?

HM: I reckon when they got to the place where they could build their own houses.

JM: I see.

HM: See, people were just fixing something where they could just shelter

you so you could work. You could lay in the house and count the stars.

JM: So when people worked for somebody, they generally didn't give them good houses?

HM: They sure didn't. When you got a good house, you got up and built it yourself.

JM: When did people get to the place where they could afford to build their own houses?

HM: Well, a few people were building their houses back then. Then that owned their own home, they built them good houses. Back there in them times, if you were on the other fellow's place you didn't have a good house.

JM: Did most of the land where the town of Vinton is belong to Mr. Watson?

HM: Sure.

JM: So all of the houses along the road there were liable to be sharecroppers' houses?

HM: That's it.

JM: And they weren't in very good shape?

HM: Sure weren't.

JM: Did you know a man named Preacher Witherspoon?

HM: Sure did, that was my first wife's uncle.

JM: What was your first wife's name?

HM: Lillie. She was Lillie Witherspoon when I married her.

JM: Were there a lot of Witherspoons around there?

HM: A lot of them.

JM: Where did Preacher Witherspoon live?

HM: Oh, he passed a few years ago.

JM: Where did he live?

HM: He lived on down here at a place they call Cooks Bottom. It is down there by the gravel pit. They own some land down there.

JM: Did he ever live up by Vinton?

HM: No, he married Preacher Shirley's sister, Celie Belle Shirley, over there.

JM: I see. Do you recall him ever being up by Vinton?

HM: No more than just visiting over there. He never lived over there.

JM: When I was doing the tape with your uncle the other day we started talking about a Mr. Killingham. You said that he lived back in slave times and that he used to tell you stories about airplanes.

HM: Sure did. I knew a man by the name of Nash Killingham, and he used to say that he was in slavery times like my great-granddaddy. He used to say, "Boy, you know one thing? Before the end of time it going to be birds and things flying around in the air." See, that's what he called airplanes. He said, "It going to be flying around up there in the air."

JM: What other things did Mr. Killingham talk about?

HM: He talked about a lot of other stuff, but I didn't pay attention to what he was saying but that. He would talk about that. . . . Yeah, let me see how he had it. He said, "Yeah, we gonna one day. . . . Y'all ain't going to have to do like we're doing. Y'all gonna. . . . You can be up there where them birds and things be in the air." I said, "Nash, you don't know what you're talking about." He said, "Yes, I do, you gonna be up there." And I said, "Ma, what old Nash talking about?" She said, "Well, he say times ain't going to be then like it is now. There's going to be things flying around up in the air." Before she left, Nash died there. Before she died there were airplanes flying around. He never did see them. . . . I don't think he ever did see them, but she did.

JM: Had you great-grandmother been a slave, too?

HM: Oh, sure, she was a slave. That's what made me know so much about it. Wouldn't be anybody at the house but me and her, and she'd be talking about old times, how they used to have to do.

JM: How did she used to have to do?

HM: Say they couldn't. . . . They had to put their heads and things under a pot. They didn't allow . . . they had to serve. . . . They couldn't serve their own God. They couldn't call on the Lord.

JM: No?

HM: They couldn't let folks hear them.

JM: Did they get to go to church?

HM: They would go but . . . how she had it they could go to church but. . . . You had to change your name. See, like them Thomases

up there, Al and my uncle, are first cousins, but they lived on the place of a man named Thomas. They had to change their name to Thomas.

JM: Did your great-grandmother marry your great-grandfather when she was a slave?

HM: I don't know how or what time they married. I don't know whether she was a slave when they married or not. But, she could tell you about slavery.

JM: Did she remember the Civil War?

HM: I heard her talk about it. I reckon she knew something about it.

JM: How did it affect her? Were times harder afterward or before?

HM: She said it was tough a lot of times. She was wanting some food to eat, and they didn't have it, had a rough time.

JM: It sounds like she never got a break in her whole life.

HM: That's it.

JM: Did she remember any soldiers around here?

HM: She didn't say anything about soldiers; I can't remember her saying nothing about them. Now, they could have been in here.

JM: Did she talk about the steamboats at all?

HM: I heard her speak about steamboats. She did talk about the steamboats and things that came up the river, and they'd go down there and look at them.

JM: Did she ever ride on one?

HM: I ain't never heard her say that she had rode on one. She was kind of scared of them. I ain't never heard her say anything about riding on one.

JM: Did she know how to swim?

HM: No, because she used to get at me about going to the river.

JM: Was she afraid she'd lose you?

HM: That's it. I'd go down there and run the ferry. A man by the name of Bear, a colored fellow, used to run the ferry. He'd get me to run it when he'd go off, and she wouldn't want me to be down there by myself. I'd go down there and run it for that fellow.

JM: When did Bear start running the ferry?

HM: Well, he was running the ferry when I was in my teens, and he ran it until up in 1930 something. He left the river, got sick, and died. When he left the ferry, I had married and had a family. I married in 1930. My smallest kid was about three or four years old.

JM: What kind of wages did you get paid for running the ferry?

HM: Oh, I didn't get no kind of wages. He'd just pay me something for running it for him. They were giving him so much a month for running it for him. See, it belonged to Mr. Andy Ellis. Bear was on his place, and he had him down there running the ferry. If he wanted to go somewhere, he'd just get me to run it for him.

JM: I see, and where did Bear live?

HM: It was a little house down there on the river; he lived in that little house.

JM: Was it at the end of the Barton Ferry Road?

HM: That's it, right on the riverbank.

JM: What side of the road would it have been on?

HM: It would be on the north side of the road, as you go down to the ferry. It was just a little, old small house; it wasn't a great big house.

JM: What kind of house was it?

HM: Oh, it was a little, old plank house.

JM: How many rooms?

HM: One.

JM: Was there another house between that house and the river?

HM: No, nothing but that one. I don't think there was anything else down there, just that little old house.

JM: Did he have any trees around that house?

HM: Oh, yes, there were plenty of little trees and bushes.

JM: Was there ever a big miller?

HM: Yes, they was millers.

JM: Was there a big miller?

HM: Yes, they was millers.

HM:

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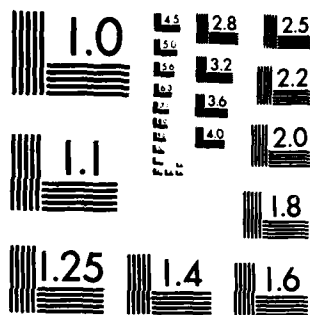
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JM: Did he keep a garden up there?

HM: I don't think Bear raised a garden.

JM: I see.

HM: He put in a little corn, watermelons and things. They would plow around there for him.

JM: Did he have a wife and children?

HM: Uh-huh, he had a wife and children.

JM: I'd sure like to thank you for this interview.

HM: You're perfectly welcome.

Addendum: The kin terms grandmother and grandfather refer to Henry Mitchell's great-grandparents, Henry and America Thomas.

JM: This is an interview with Henry Mitchell for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by James M. McClurken. Mr. Mitchell's address is Route 2, Box 214, West Point, Mississippi 39773. The interview is taking place in Mr. Mitchell's home on April 10, 1980. His telephone number is 494-4878.

Mr. Mitchell, the last time I was here, we did a little bit of your biography. We talked about where you were born, when you were born, and a little bit about what it was like for you growing up in the Town Creek community. You told me where you worked, and the names of a few of the old-timers that you used to know. I have a list of people here that I had wanted to ask you about. I was wondering if you knew Mr. Job Trotter?

HM: I've heard talk of him, but I didn't know him personally.

JM: Did you know any of his children, who they were, or where they lived?

HM: I didn't know any of them.

JM: How about Mr. Larry Keaton?

HM: I knew him well. He had a sister named Diddie Keaton, and he had another sister named Luiza. That's all of them I know, just three of them.

JM: Can you tell me just where they lived?

HM: At the time I knew his sister, she lived over there around the Barton Road, close to Town Creek.

JM: Was it down by the church?

HM: Down by the church.

JM: I see.

HM: I did know her. She used to live on the Watson's place, up there in the woods.

JM: Which side of the old Vinton Road did she live?

HM: It would be on the west side of the old Vinton Road, a long way in the woods up there. I would say about a half mile back in the woods, off the Vinton Road.

JM: Would she have lived just about north of your great-grandfather?

HM: Sure would.

JM: What kind of a house did she have?

HM: Well, I didn't visit her too much. I was small; I don't know. . . . It was a little log house, I believe.

JM: Would it have had two rooms and an open hall?

HM: I think so.

JM: Is Bill Keaton related to Larry Keaton?

HM: I think Bill Keaton and Larry Keaton were brothers. I wasn't acquainted with Bill Keaton, but I think they were brothers.

JM: Did they live in the same community?

HM: Pretty close, I think. I don't really know.

JM: Was Diddle Keaton Larry Keaton's sister?

HM: That's right.

JM: Okay. How about Flander Keaton?

HM: I didn't know her.

JM: How about Flim Keaton?

HM: I didn't know him. I've heard them talking about him.

JM: Were these people all before your time?

HM: Before my time.

JM: How about Jack Young?

HM: I don't know him.

JM: How about Jackson Hodges?

HM: Wasn't acquainted with him.

JM: Tom Strong?

HM: I've heard talk of him.

JM: Was he in that area?

HM: I wouldn't know where he was.

JM: How about Mr. S. H. Whatley?

HM: Yeah, I knew of him pretty good.

JM: Could you tell me what he did for a living?

HM: I never knew him to do anything. (laughter)

JM: You don't remember the Vinton store when it was operating, do you?

HM: No, I don't remember the store.

JM: Did he live near the store there?

HM: Not when I knew him. When I knew him, he was living a good ways from down here, wasn't no store or nothing operating, and the Watsons weren't even living down in here.

JM: Was Mr. Whatley living north of Vinton?

HM: No, he was west of the Vinton School. See, where the school was, there's a road that ran up there by his home.

JM: How about Grant Moore?

HM: Oh, I knew him well.

JM: Where did Grant live?

HM: Well, he lived on the Watson place, and in my day, he moved around a lot of places. Me and him lived pretty close together before he passed.

JM: Was he about your age?

HM: Oh, he was way older. He was along there with my uncle.

JM: Why did people move so often out there?

HM: Well, they were sharecropping. If you didn't make enough, the fellow didn't want you. You had to move to somebody else. He figured that he could get a better share hand than you.

JM: What would make one hand better than another hand?

HM: Well, see this other probably had more in family working than the other man did. See, that's what they'd be looking at.

JM: Would they just tell somebody to get up and leave?

HM: That's it. He might bring you out in debt, and you wouldn't like how he settled up with you so you'd move.

JM: Did most sharecroppers buy stuff from the stores that landlords owned?

HM: Well, at that time, sharecroppers were. . . You didn't have any

money to do any other buying. When you started farming and making a crop, they start allowancing you. See, you didn't have any money to buy with. They were what you call allowancing. They were feeding you, and they'd give you clothes that you could work in, in the field. You didn't get any Sunday clothes.

JM: What kind of clothes were they?

HM: Overalls and shirts for men; gingham and homespun for the ladies.

JM: What kind of food allowances did they get?

HM: Fatback meat, molasses, and corn bread. That was just about it. Some of them would give them flour, a few of them.

JM: But not very often?

HM: Not very often.

JM: What was the average size of a sharecropper's family?

HM: Some would have four, three, two, five and ten in the family. Sometimes they'd have a large family.

JM: Were the ones that had ten children the ones that everybody wanted?

HM: That's right, the bigger family you were, the better you were. That's how you had this one pulling at you and that one pulling at you. If you had a big family you could work a heap of land.

JM: Did they ever offer you more money to come work for them?

HM: Oh, yeah, they'd offer you more money.

JM: Did you ever get it?

HM: Oh, they'd give it to you before you ever moved there; they'd get you if you tied up there, you see. When they gave you that money, they done wrapped and tied you all up. You'd be there working. They never let you come out of debt. See, they kept you unless somebody else wanted to pay you out.

JM: Was that standard practice?

HM: Most everybody did that.

JM: Is that the way Watson kept his hands on the place, too?

HM: I imagine so.

JM: How did you get any little extras that you'd have during Christmas-time?

HM: Well, in my times it was getting better and better every year. You could work out making fifty cents a day. You see, I could live and feed my family out of fifty cents a day. That's three dollars a week, you see, and I knew I was going to have it to go in my pocket. Things were cheap. I would buy all of my groceries out of fifty cents and have something in my pocket. You were getting whole middlings of meat and these twenty-five pound sacks of flour for a quarter, then.

JM: Did you get along fairly well?

HM: Got along very well.

JM: It was just that you were always in debt?

HM: Just kept you always in debt if you just wasn't scheming.

JM: How did you get extra food?

HM: Well, you'd work out for somebody and get you a few dollars.

JM: Could you keep your own cattle and your own horses on your property?

HM: Oh, yes, if you had your own stuff, you just rented the land and worked it. That's the reason you had to sharecrop. Not many people had anything.

JM: Your great-grandfather had his own place, didn't he?

HM: He had his own place and his own stock.

JM: There must have been somebody in your community that you respected a great deal. What kind of job did he do?

HM: Well, I had an uncle. I didn't know him, but he came into being kind of wealthy. I guess that helped him along pretty good. See, my uncle Joe Mitchell, he stayed with him a whole lot, first with my grandfather then back with my uncle.

JM: What kind of work did he do?

HM: Well, he farmed but. . . .

JM: He just did well?

HM: He did well at it.

JM: I see. I know that Mr. Andrew Lenoir was your teacher.

HM: Sure was. He taught my uncle, my mother, and taught me, too. He was a nice man.

JM: What other kinds of jobs were available out there besides teaching and farming?

HM: Well, way back in them times teaching school and farming was. . . . Well, they had me bale hay, go out and work in the hayfield. You could make a little money.

JM: Could you tell me how they put up hay?

HM: They would cut it, take the mules to a mower and cut it. Then they just forked it up, pushed it up to the press, forked it over, and baled it; put it in bales and put wire around it. Now, they put strings around it. You don't catch bales much.

JM: And how big was a bale?

HM: A bale would weigh from seventy-five to eighty to ninety pounds.

JM: Did one man lift that?

HM: One man would lift that.

JM: How many bales would you lift a day?

HM: I wasn't nothing but a child. They let the men handle it, and I'd get on a pair of mules and a raker, raking it up.

JM: I see.

HM: I didn't do any lifting; I didn't.

JM: What kind of a rake was it?

HM: It was a steel rake with two mules pulling it.

JM: Was it what they called a dump rake?

HM: Dump rake.

JM: Did you do that all day long when you were a boy?

HM: That's it.

JM: I got some more people here that I'd like to ask you about. What about Slater Russell?

HM: I didn't know him.

JM: Would there be a man named Russell Slater?

HM: Well, there could have been a man named Russell, old man Russell. He used to live with my uncle, and they stayed down there in Cooks Bottom. I don't know what his first name was; his last name was old man Russell. He came from out west from out here.

JM: I see. How about Ike Crawford?

HM: Ike Crawford, if I make no mistake, was my auntie's husband.

JM: And what aunt is that?

HM: She was named Elenora Strong. Pat was her nickname. She left here and went to the Delta. I never did meet her husband. I just heard talk of him. Elenora Strong was Doc Strong's daughter. Doc Strong was my great-grandmother America Thomas's brother.

JM: What was her name?

HM: She was named Pat.

JM: I see. Was she gone before you were born?

HM: That's it.

JM: How about Mattie Crawford?

HM: Mattie Crawford, looks like I ought to know her, but I don't think I do.

JM: Think she might be a relative?

HM: I believe . . . I think she is relative to. . . . I think that Elenora was Cousin Sissy's name. Elenora Crawford, we called her Sis.

JM: How about Joe Harris?

HM: I know him well. I ate many a fish with him.

JM: What was he up to?

HM: He was just an old bachelor, just stayed on the river and fished all of the time.

JM: How did he catch his fish?

HM: Well, he had set hooks and a net.

JM: And did he run a boat?

HM: Yeah.

JM: What kind of boat?

HM: He ran the ferry for awhile.

JM: How about Bear Hawkins?

HM: Well, he ran the ferry for awhile and fished, too.

JM: Where did Bear Hawkins live?

HM: Well, he lived up on the Ellis place, and they transferred him down there to the river. They owned the ferry down there, and he was down there running that ferry for them.

JM: Where did his house sit?

HM: Up on the hill from the river. It was a little small house.

JM: Was it north of Barton Ferry Road?

HM: Well, the road that went to the ferry ran around to his house. It sat on the north side.

JM: Was there any other house between his house and the river?

HM: They had some camphouses down there, but they were south of him.

JM: Did his house sit on the bluff that runs straight down to the river?

HM: Yes, that's it.

JM: Can you describe the house to me?

HM: Oh, it was just a little, small plank house with a couple of windows in it.

JM: How many rooms did it have?

HM: He had two little rooms. I'd say a room and a kitchen.

JM: What happened to that house?

HM: I don't know. I imagine that they tore it down after he left from down there. There wasn't anybody to stay down there to run it. They cut that ferry out.

JM: Was he a bachelor, too?

HM: No, he's married. He was a bachelor when he first went down there, but he married and had a family.

JM: Are any of his children still around?

HM: No, they all left from around here, but I think some of them are still living.

JM: Well, I guess we won't get to find them on this trip. How about Dave Mathis?

HM: Well, I knew him pretty well. I knew the old man, and I know he has a son named Dave. He's in St. Louis, now.

JM: Where did he live?

HM: Lived there on the Cox place.

JM: Why was that called the Cox place?

HM: Well, that's where they separated the land. All of it belong to Watson, you see.

JM: Yeah.

HM: The Vinton part is north of the Barton Ferry Road, and the Cox place is south of the road.

JM: Was there anybody named Cox who lived there?

HM: I don't know anything about it; they just called it Cox. When I came here that's what they were calling it.

JM: How about Andrew Mathews?

HM: I've heard talk of him; I just didn't know him.

JM: Am I saying this right? Is the name Mathews or is it Mathis?

HM: Mathis, I think. That's the way it went, Mathis.

JM: Were all of those people named Mathis and not Mathews?

HM: That's it.

JM: How about Rob Mathis?

HM: Well, I would say that I've heard talk of him, but that was a little before my time.

JM: Was it in your uncle's time?

HM: That's it.

JM: How about March Montgomery?

HM: Well, I knew him pretty well. He's got a son that stays right there near where Bill Moore's house was. You get to his house before you do Warddell's. His name is Peter Montgomery.

JM: Do you know anything about where March Montgomery came from?

HM: I don't know where he came from, but he used to live back in there. It's a big hill back in there on the way that you go to the gravel pit on this road past my house. It's going toward the river. They call it March Hill. They say he used to live back in there.

JM: How about Van Howard?

HM: Well, I knew him pretty good. He lived north of Vinton Road, way up there in those woods.

JM: Do you remember talking to him?

HM: Oh, I've talked with him a lot, because he came out of there and moved to town. He has a son there in town now.

JM: Did he ever talk to you about the history of that place out there?

HM: No, he never did say anything about that.

JM: How about George Gresham?

HM: Didn't know him.

JM: Lawrence Mathis?

HM: I knew him pretty good. That was my uncle's wife's uncle.

JM: Your wife's uncle?

HM: No, he was Joe Mitchell's wife's uncle.

JM: Who was Joe Mitchell's wife?

HM: His wife was named Lou.

JM: What was her maiden name?

HM: She was Lou Paynes before he got her.

JM: Was she from around here, too?

HM: That's right. He got her off of the Cox place. That's where he married her from.

JM: How did they meet? Do you have any idea?

HM: Well, he didn't have any way to get around. I was just a little small boy. I'd walk over there with him to see her. I can remember when he married her. (laughter)

JM: Did they go to the same church?

HM: (nods affirmative)

JM: What church was that?

HM: London Chapel and Town Creek.

JM: How did London Chapel get it's name?

HM: I don't know how London got that name; I don't know where it came

from. I don't know whether they named it after somebody on the place in there or what. When I got big enough, that's what it was.

JM: I see that they put up a brand new building.

HM: Yeah, they got a nice church now. In my small time, coming up, it was a big, old plank church.

JM: Did you go to that one more than you went to Town Creek?

HM: I went to London Chapel more than I've been to Town Creek. It hasn't been there too long.

JM: What was the inside of the church like?

HM: Oh, it wasn't sealed.

JM: Was it just a plank outside?

HM: That's it.

JM: Did it have open rafters in it?

HM: That's it. When they tore that one down, they put up another one. I don't know if they tore it down or if it was wind, but it was repaired or something. They sealed it on the inside.

JM: Did they have pews in it, or did they have benches?

HM: They had benches in it.

JM: Did you sing with songbooks?

HM: Oh, I have sang with songbooks, but we had what you call a singing class there. That's when I sang out of a songbook, when I learned how to sing with the singing class.

JM: How did you know the words to all the songs when you were singing in church? Was it just something you knew?

HM: Well, I went to school enough to learn. You can learn by hearing. You could follow somebody else if you just didn't know it.

JM: Did you have song leaders?

HM: Oh, yeah, you had leaders.

JM: I'm curious to know how long one of your services was?

HM: I reckon they were probably about three hours sometimes, if you didn't have anything to do. When you weren't going somewhere, they might have service might near all day. (laughter)

JM: People don't go for that much anymore, do they?

HM: They sure don't. See, they didn't get tired at the church then. They get tired now, an hour and a half is as long as they want it.

JM: Did they have any deacons in the church?

HM: Uh-huh.

JM: Did they have both deacons and elders? Who were they?

HM: Well, I was calling them all deacons, but at London Chapel they called them stewards. All of them do the same thing; stewards just have different names.

JM: I see. What was their job in the church?

HM: Opening the service, raising money to do things around the church, to give the preacher, pay for the lights, pay for somebody cleaning up the church, and giving money to the people that are sick, and they raised money for the poor.

JM: How were these men chosen?

HM: The church chooses the men.

JM: Were they called to it, or were they just chosen by the people?

HM: They were just chosen by the people. See, they got that from the Bible. They read and saw in the Bible, where they got seven men and had teaching wherever there was a house. They just choosed them.

JM: Did you have regular preachers?

HM: Oh, yeah.

JM: Did they preach every Sunday?

HM: No, people are so few in the country churches that they don't have preaching every Sunday. See, churches were pretty close. Well, this church here has it this Sunday, and this other church has it the next Sunday.

JM: Would you have preaching every other week?

HM: Well, sometimes. Some churches have it every Sunday, some have it two Sundays a month.

JM: I see.

HM: Back then, in those times, they just had preaching one Sunday a month.

JM: Do you remember any of the old preachers at London Chapel Church?

HM: When I hear somebody call the name, I remember.

JM: Did your uncle Joe Mitchell ever preach there?

HM: Oh, yes, he preached there a whole lot. You see, they had a thing going around called the preacher's union. There were as many as ten or twelve preachers in it. They would go in a circuit to different churches. He preached there many and many a time.

JM: Would a Baptist preacher sometimes preach in a Methodist church?

HM: Sure would.

JM: Didn't make much difference?

HM: Didn't make no difference.

JM: What's the difference between the Baptists and the Methodists?

HM: Just the name of the denomination, that's all.

JM: Do they believe the same?

HM: That's it.

JM: Let's go back to a few more names that I have to get straightened out. How about Dave Mathis?

HM: Well, I knew him. He had a bunch of children. I don't know whether this man that I'm fixing. . . . He had a deaf man in the family. I don't know if it was his brother or his wife's brother.

JM: How about Bob Mathis?

HM: I didn't know Bob.

JM: Boston Mathis?

HM: Oh, yeah, I knew Boston Mathis. When you were a good preacher, they called you a jack-leg preacher. He was a jack-leg preacher. He lived in town. He had the first hearse I ever saw to carry people to the cemetery. When the city of West Point got a fire truck--you know, they used a fire wagon with horses--he bought the fire horses to pull his little hearse, and when the whistle blew they'd be gone. (laughter) He had a body in there, the whistle blew, he'd try to hold them, and they'd be gone.

JM: Did you ever see that happen?

HM: I didn't see that happen but I heard talk of it.

JM: So, he owned his own hearse. Would he bring folks from the church to the cemetery after the funeral?

HM: That's right.

JM: Did people ever hold funeral services in their homes?

HM: Not that I know anything about. It would always be at the church.

JM: Would they lay the people out for a few days?

HM: Oh, no. Way back yonder, when I was first coming up, there wasn't any embalming. If you would pass, they would shroud you at home, lay you out there, and they'd sit up with you at night. They'd go and get the casket to put you in, and they'd bury you the next day, because they didn't have any way to embalm you.

JM: What kind of casket did you usually have?

HM: Oh, they'd be just like these that they have today, but they just wouldn't be quite as fine. It wasn't a box or anything like they had way back.

JM: Were they wooden?

HM: They'd be wooden, but they put cloth and stuff around them like they do now.

JM: What color were they?

HM: Some of them would be gray looking; some of them would be dove color.

JM: They came in several different colors?

HM: That's it.

JM: Who would take care of making the arrangements for digging the grave and stuff like that?

HM: Well, according to what church they went to, they'd go and see some of the deacons and make arrangements to have the grave dug.

JM: How would they go about digging a grave? Would they dig a square hole?

HM: A square hole, six foot long and about three and a half or maybe four foot wide, according to how large the person was.

JM: Did people put markers of any kind on graves back then?

HM: Well, it looks to me like they put them on better back then than they do now.

JM: What kind of markers did you see?

HM: Well, they were making the tombstones and putting on them.

JM: Did people ever use wooden crosses?

HM: Some of them.

JM: Did people ever decorate the graves with colored glass?

HM: I never did see it.

JM: When somebody died and the hearse wasn't available, how would they bring them from the church?

HM: The wagon.

JM: Would they have a procession where the people would follow the wagon?

HM: Uh-huh. There wasn't nothing behind it but wagons. They didn't have cars or anything.

JM: Did the people walk, or did they ride in their wagons?

HM: Some would walk, some would ride in their wagon, and some had buggies.

JM: Were the cemeteries usually by the church?

HM: No, they used to be way off. But now, might near all of the churches have them.

JM: When did they start doing that?

HM: Oh, in about 1940, they started getting cemeteries at the church.

JM: Is there a cemetery on the Cox place?

HM: Sure is a cemetery on the Cox place. I heard them say that one was on there. I don't know exactly where, but I've heard tell of one there.

JM: Was there ever one at the old town of Barton?

HM: Now, if there's one around the Barton Ferry, I don't know anything about it.

JM: How about Vinton?

HM: Oh, there's one at Vinton.

JM: Did black people bury in the Vinton Cemetery?

HM: I reckon they did; I wouldn't know. I know whites are buried there; I don't know about the colored.

JM: I just wondered if they were buried together at that time.

HM: I don't think they were. I think that was the old Watson graveyard. I reckon there's a lot of people out there. They had one out there that's got glass around him. You could go out there and see it, but I never did.

JM: Did you ever hear tell of a cyclone that passed through there?

HM: Oh, I've heard tell of the cyclone that passed through before my time, when I was a baby. I heard my mother talking about it. It must have been before my time. I was little or something, because I can't remember it.

JM: Would you recall Mr. Andy Mathis?

HM: I've heard talk but I didn't know him.

JM: How about Harrison Berry?

HM: I heard a lot of talk of him.

JM: Was he another old man in your time?

HM: That's it.

JM: Pierce Miller?

HM: I've heard a lot of talk of him; I just didn't know him.

JM: Do you know Isah Sykes?

HM: Isah Sykes, I know some Sykes, but I don't believe I know that one.

JM: Would the Sykes have lived around Vinton?

HM: I knew some Sykes people that stayed around here, but they lived on the Cox place.

JM: How about Georgia Trotter?

HM: I've heard talk of her, but I don't know her.

JM: How about Jim Moore?

HM: Well, I know Jim Moore. That was my neighbor, Rueben Moore's uncle. Jim Moore was his daddy's brother.

JM: Did he live up by Vinton at any time?

HM: He surely did. He lived up there for awhile, then I think he moved to Strongs. Then he left Strongs and went to the Delta. I think that's where he died, in the Delta.

JM: Don't you know where he would have lived when he worked on the Watson's place?

HM: No, I don't know.

JM: Did he have a big family?

HM: He had a big family.

JM: How about Jeff Daugherty?

HM: Oh, I knew him well. There were two Jeff Daughertys, the old man and the son.

JM: One of these would have been a hand on the Watson place. Which one would that have been?

HM: I imagine that would have been his son, because the old man owned his own home.

JM: Do you know where he lived?

HM: The old man or his son?

JM: The son.

HM: I don't think he lived too far from Diddie Keaton.

JM: How about Bill Moore? I don't think we've talked about him.

HM: Bill Moore was Jim Moore's brother. He lived on the Watson place. He was on the Vinton place. His house was right in the same spot . . . just about the same spot where Warddell Moore's is at now. That's where he lived.

JM: What side of Wardell Moore's house would he have been on?

HM: Warddell's house was on the east side of the Vinton's road.

JM: Would the Moore house have been to the north of Warddell's house, or would it have been to the south of it?

HM: That house would have been on the east side of the road.

JM: I asked you about Larry Keaton. . . . Your uncle mentioned on his tape that he lived north of the general store. I was wondering if you could give me any. . . ?

HM: In my time, the store wasn't operating.

JM: So, you wouldn't remember him when he lived in that direction?

HM: I wouldn't remember anything about that direction.

JM: I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit of the history of Concob Church?

HM: Oh, yeah, Concob Church. There have been many of Concob's built. Storms blew them down. They're building a new one there now. I'll say it's north of the Vinton School. Well, it's a bit of ways through that way.

JM: Do you know who founded the church?

HM: I don't know. Now, I've got a cousin that lives up there. Albert Thomas can probably tell you.

JM: How is he related to you?

HM: His daddy and my mama's daddy were brothers.

JM: What was her daddy's name?

HM: My mother's daddy was named Bryant Mitchell. What Albert's daddy was named, I couldn't tell you.

JM: But they were brothers, I see. Was their father's father Henry Thomas?

HM: That was my great-grandfather, Henry Thomas.

JM: Would their father have been one of Henry's children?

HM: No.

JM: Am I still a generation off?

HM: That was another generation. Henry Thomas's daughter married into this Mitchell family. See, she was a Thomas before she married.

JM: Who was the first one to marry into the Mitchell family?

HM: Joe Mitchell's mother. Then Albert Thomas's mother married. . . .

JM: Was his mother Viola?

HM: That's right. That was my grandmother, but my great-grandmother and granddaddy, Henry Thomas, were the ones that raised me. They raised Joe Mitchell, too, because Viola married and her husband died. Then she married a man named Monroe Randle and moved out west of town, out there by Siloam. She married Randle and moved out there to Siloam.

JM: On the land maps, it shows her owning a piece of land around your great-grandfather's house. Did she own land there, too?

HM: She inherited it; her daddy owned it.

JM: When he died, how did they break up the land?

HM: Well, they lost the land. You know, people got your land when you didn't pay your tax. See, you didn't make anything, and you didn't have money to pay the tax with. Somebody just paid the tax and got the land.

JM: How long did you have to pay the taxes before you lost it?

HM: I don't know. They paid him . . . well, they just, well. . . . You see, at that time they'd just pay your tax and shove you out. There wasn't two or three years or anything on it. I don't remember paying but once. Now there's a limit of time when you can pay your taxes.

JM: Is it a little more fair, now?

HM: Yeah, it's a little more fair now than it was then.

JM: Was your family able to hold onto that piece of land for quite awhile?

HM: Oh, well, me and my great-grandmother, after my great-grandfather died, worked and got it out of debt. They messed around and put it back in debt. That man paid the taxes and got it. The man that they got money from said he had to have it back. They didn't have it to give him, so that's how they lost it.

JM: You mentioned that your great-grandmother was a slave. Do you know what plantation she would have been on?

HM: I sure don't. I think she just . . . always like me and you are sitting down . . . nobody would be at home but me and her. She'd just be sitting down telling me . . . how . . . all about it.

JM: You told me about one of the punishments that they gave her. Did she say what kind of work she had to do when she was a slave?

HM: No, she didn't. She never did mention that. I didn't know anything but that she farmed and worked around the house.

JM: She got to work around the house instead of out in the fields?

HM: She was small when she was working around the house. When she got big enough to go to field, that's what she had to do.

JM: How big did she have to be before she went out to the fields?

HM: Oh, you have to be about twelve or thirteen years old when they put you in the fields.

JM: Did she remember the War?

HM: Oh, yeah, she talked about it.

JM: Did she say how life was while that was going on?

HM: She didn't say much about that.

JM: Did she celebrate the day that she got her freedom?

HM: Well, I didn't hear her say too much about it.

JM: Was there a celebration on May 8?

HM: There was.

JM: Did she ever tell you what that was about?

HM: I don't know whether she said that was the day they were set free or not. Must have been, because I heard a lot of people call that "nigger day." That's what they were using back then, you see. That was about the day, I imagine, they got freed. They always celebrated that day. After I got large enough, Concob always celebrated the eighth of May.

JM: How did you celebrate it?

HM: They'd be up there selling barbeque and drinks and things, having ball games.

JM: Did they start early in the morning and go all day?

HM: All day and late at night.

JM: Did you have drummers?

HM: Sometimes there'd be drums in there.

JM: What kind of drums did they play?

HM: Big drums; sometimes they'd be little small kettles.

JM: Were they store-bought drums?

HM: That's right. Store-bought, beating them with sticks.

JM: Was there anybody who made drums out there?

HM: I never did see no homemade drums.

JM: No, what kind of rhythms did they play? Could you describe them?

HM: I didn't pay them that much attention. I'd just hear them beating them; that's all I know.

JM: Is there anything that they sound like today? Any kind of music?

HM: Oh, it sounds like these drums out here beating now, you know, these here . . . I hear a lot of fellows beating these big drums.

They didn't have tambourines like people now have. You didn't even see any of them then, just these big drums, a boom boom boom.

JM: Did people dance to that?

HM: Sometimes they would, and sometimes they wouldn't.

JM: What other kinds of things did your grandmother tell you about slavery?

HM: Oh, she would talk about how they would whip you and make you work.

JM: What did they whip her for?

HM: Well, if you didn't work to suit them--that's what she talking about--they would whip you. If they had you out picking cotton and said, "I want you to get me two hundred pounds today." If you didn't get that two hundred, you see, they'd whip you. . . . Or a hundred and something. If they whip you and you get two hundred tomorrow, you'd have to get three the next day. If you didn't get it, they'd whip you until they saw that you couldn't get it.

JM: Did she ever get any rest days?

HM: No more than Sunday, I think that was the only rest day they were giving them, then.

JM: Did she live with her mother and father when she was a little girl?

HM: I don't know; I didn't hear her say.

JM: Did they ever take any pictures of your family?

HM: I had a picture of my great-grandmother and even one of my grandmother, but what became of it, I wouldn't know. I think Uncle Joe got that picture. When Grandmother passed, she had some pictures of them but he got them. Now he ain't got one, got rid of all that stuff.

JM: Did Concob Church function a lot like London Chapel? Did they have deacons there, too?

HM: All of them function about the same; all of the Baptist function about the same way. The Methodist do too. They just have different names.

JM: Why is there a Concob 1 and a Concob 2?

HM: Way back, you see, they pulled out two from one. Now, their members are so scarce that they went back to number one. Number two kicked out; ain't nothing to it. It's gone back to number one. They didn't have enough members.

JM: You remember the time when the boll weevil came, don't you?

HM: Sure do.

JM: What happened?

HM: I don't know how they got in here. They got in here fooling with the cotton, bolling the cotton.

JM: Did a lot of people leave when the boll weevil came? What happened to the sharecroppers?

HM: A lot of them left from around in here in the boll weevil's time. They went where they could do better, I reckon.

JM: Do you know where they moved to?

HM: Some went to the Delta. Some went to Arkansas, just drifted around and never got. . . . Some went to the cities for public work.

JM: How did they leave?

HM: There were trains running then, you know. They'd get them a few dollars and catch the train. When I went in the Army, I came home, back and forth, on the train. I'd ride the train four days and four nights to get back home.

JM: Where were you stationed?

HM: Tacoma, Washington.

JM: That was a long ways.

HM: Sure was.

JM: What prompted you to join the army?

HM: They sent me; I didn't join it. After I got in, I always wanted to go overseas. I went overseas for eleven months.

JM: To what country?

HM: Manila and Japan.

JM: Yeah.

HM: That's a hot place, Manila was. (laughter)

JM: I want to ask you a couple of more questions about things in your house. When you lived with your great-grandmother, when you were a boy, where did you get your light?

HM: Oil lamp.

JM: What kind of lamp?

HM: Coal oil. We had coal oil, and it had a chimney on it. You'd light it with a match and put a chimney on it.

JM: Were they glass-bottomed?

HM: Glass lamps.

JM: Did they have reflectors on them?

HM: Had a flat, flat bottom.

JM: Did they have a little pan on the back that reflected the light?

HM: Oh, no. I have seen that kind, but we didn't have them.

JM: Did you have a mirror in the house?

HM: Oh, yeah, we had a big dresser glass; the dressers had glass. The washstands even had glasses in them. At that time, they had a dresser. It had a big glass high up, and the little washstand just had a little glass up at the top of it.

JM: So, you always had plenty of ways to see yourself.

HM: That's it.

JM: I want to ask you about what kind of dishes you used?

HM: The dishes were just like these dishes now but weren't quite as fancy. The plates were like these, but they were just slick, common plates.

JM: Were they made out of ceramics?

HM: That's it.

JM: Were they white china?

HM: White, white china.

JM: And what about pans?

HM: Well, the pans were just like these.

JM: They were cast iron?

HM: Oh, no, they were tin. The skillets were cast iron. I don't know about aluminum pans when I was a boy.

JM: What did you scald your hogs in?

HM: Oh, in these big old drums that you see out here. We'd dig a hole to put the kindling in, and have the barrel kind of cocked up like

this. We'd have it full of water, and put a fire under it. You put your hog in there, turn him over and change that end. Then you put him back in there. You'd take him out and pull the hair off of him.

JM: So, you'd use a fifty-gallon drum?

HM: That's it.

JM: I see, what kind of buckets did you have?

HM: Old buckets like these they got now. They were tin buckets, galvanized tin buckets. Some of them had wooden cedar buckets back in that time. Then, you know, they had these tin, eight-pound lard buckets. You could use those buckets when you got them empty.

JM: Where did you throw your garbage?

HM: You didn't have cans to put it in. You just had a big old drum, take it out, and burn it.

JM: What about the glass and stuff?

HM: You just had to find a hollow or something to put your glass in.

JM: Did you carry it away from the house?

HM: That's right, take it away from the house.

JM: Did you keep a swept yard?

HM: Oh, the yard was clean; didn't no grass grow in the yard. Now you mow your yard. It'd be grassy but you'd keep it cut.

JM: Which takes more effort?

HM: I believe the clean yard was the best, because they kept it clean. They had it full of flowers.

JM: What kind of flowers?

HM: Mostly roses, all kinds of flowers.

JM: Did most people have brick chimneys?

HM: Most of them had them; some of them had what you call stack chimneys. They'd be made with sticks crossing and daubed with mud so that it wouldn't catch fire.

JM: Were there bricks on the inside of stack chimneys?

HM: Wasn't no bricks with them at all, but now they do have brick chimneys.

JM: Where did the brick come from?

HM: Well, I've seen them made. They'd be made out of mud.

JM: Where did they make them?

HM: They'd make them over in Columbus, at a place called the brickyard. That's the first place I ever knew of. They have a lot of places that made bricks now.

JM: When you were a boy, they'd go all the way to Columbus to get their brick?

HM: That's the first place I knew anything about. I went to school over there awhile. I had a cousin, Henry Strong, Doc Strong's son, that worked at this brickyard; I'd take him his lunch. I'd just stay there and see them make bricks.

JM: Were all of the bricks that they used on the site baked?

HM: If they don't bake them, I don't think they would be hard, won't be anything to them. They ain't nothing but mud. They have to bake them, dress them with something to get them hard.

JM: Did they ever make brick out by where you lived, maybe in your uncle's time?

HM: I ain't heard him say anything about it.

JM: When you were a boy, did you gather nuts?

HM: Sure did. I gathered a lot of them when I was a boy. Well, I gathered a few since I've had a family. Pecan, I gathered them. I didn't worry about no scaly barks.

JM: Didn't you like scaly barks?

HM: I like them, but I never did worry about going out gathering them. See, I'd gather pecans and sell them. There wasn't any sale on scaly barks, and I wasn't really worried about gathering them to bring them to the house to eat them.

JM: Yeah. What did you do with the nuts when you were a boy?

HM: Oh, I was eating them then, when I was a boy. After I got grown and gathered them, got a family, I'd gather pecans and sell them at Duke Pecans over there.

JM: Oh, I see.

HM: See, me and Dukes were. . . . I knew him. We kind of come up together a little bit, and he'd always ask me about getting some pecans. I'd get them, carry them over there, and sell them to him.

JM: How much would you get for a bushel?

HM: Oh, I never did sell a bushel. He'd just give you so much a pound. I'd pick them up until I'd get tired, maybe a flour sack or half full, and get ten dollars or something like that.

JM: Was it worth bringing them in?

HM: That's it.

JM: When you were a boy, did your grandmother ever bake things with nuts?

HM: She didn't care nothing for it.

JM: What did you do with the shells when you were done with them?

HM: Oh, just take them and throw them out.

JM: Throw them out of the door?

HM: Oh, no! You'd have to carry that stuff away from the house.
(laughter)

JM: What kind of a broom would she use?

HM: Well, you see, she had brush brooms around. They kept brush for sweeping the yard. She would whack me with anything she'd get in her hands! (laughter)

JM: What's a brush broom?

HM: It's a lot of bushes cut and tied up to sweep with.

JM: What kind of bush would they use?

HM: Well, they'd use dogwood, these here plum side, and some other things that had a lot of limbs on it so that you could sweep the yard with it.

JM: When you were sick, did you go to the doctor?

HM: Sure did.

JM: What doctor did you go to?

HM: He's named George Darracott. He lived up yonder on the Aberdeen Road. Well, it's the Vinton Road. It led straight on to it.

JM: If you were real sick, did they carry you up there?

HM: My great-grandfather had taken me up there. That's the first time I went to the doctor.

JM: What did you have?

HM: I don't know whether it was malaria fever or what; I had a high fever. And he had taken me up once when I had two boils under my arms, and the doctor lanced it.

JM: I'd like to thank you for the interview tonight.

HM: Oh, you are welcome.

JM: And I've enjoyed it.

HM: You're perfectly welcome.